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ABSTRACT

This collection of essays reveals a keen awareness of the degree to which ethics and ethical systems are located in particular instructional contexts. The essays consider the implications of these contexts from a variety of perspectives, both theoretical and pedagogical. In the collection's first part, Ethics and the Composition Classroom, are the following essays: (1) "Pedagogical Ethics and a Cultural Studies Composition Course: Implications of Discourse Ethics" (Lisa M. Toner); (2) "Advocacy in the Writing Classroom" (John Ruszkiewicz); (3) "Advocating Language: An Ethical Approach to Politics in the Classroom" (William H. Thelin); (4) "Refiguring Classroom Authority" (Andrea Abernethy Lunsford); (5) "The Ethics of Plagiarism" (Rebecca Moore Howard); and (6) "An Ethics of Difference" (Myrna Harrienger and Nan Uber-Kellogg). In the second part, Ethics and Specialized Writing Programs, are these essays: (7) "Composition as Service: Implications of Utilitarian, Duties, and Care Ethics" (Larry Beason); and (8) "Ethics in Technical/Professional Communication: From Telling the Truth to Making Better Decisions in a Complex World" (Cezar M. Ornatowski). In the third part, Ethics and the Profession, are these essays: (9) "A Conflict of Personal and Institutional Ethics: Writing Instruction and Composition Scholarship" (Mary Trachsel); (10) "Literacy, Equality, and Competence: Ethics in Writing Assessment" (Michael M. Williamson and Brian Huot); (11) "Exploring Our Ethics of Evaluating Student Writing" (Jane Detweiler, Jane Mathison Fife, Robert W. McEachern, and Lauren Sewell Coulter); (12) "Going Public" (Peter Mortensen); and (13) "The Ethics of Public Review" (Miles Myers). (NKA)

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OF WRITING INSTRUCTION

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Volume 4 in the series
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The Ethics of Writing Instruction: Issues in Theory and Practice

edited by
Michael A. Pemberton
Georgia Southern University

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Introduction

Michael A. Pemberton
Georgia Southern University

Concerns about the relationship between ethics and writing instruction are not new. They have, in fact, a rather long and enduring history, which originates in classical Greek and Roman texts and continues—in somewhat more covert fashion—to the present day. Over the course of the last 2,000 years, ethics have been of significant interest to a long line of teachers, writers, and philosophers who have believed that there are immutable links between the rules of proper discourse in texts and the rules of proper conduct in a civilized society. Both Plato (as expressed in *Phaedrus* and the *Republic*) and Aristotle (as described in his *Ethics* and *Poetics*) believed that the social functions of oral and written discourse and the practical needs of a democratic society required an educated populace trained in the principles of rhetorical persuasion and ethical conduct. The construction of the ethical rhetor, motivated by the spirit of *civitas* to employ rhetoric for worthy and socially beneficial ends, was for this reason the ultimate goal of many classical educational systems, including those designed and advocated by Cicero (*De Oratore*) and Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria*).

Early American educators, texts, and pedagogies followed in this tradition, operating under the assumption that ethics and ethical training were essential to the development of the moral individual and an enlightened democracy. Early readers such as the *New England Primer* (1690), for example, offered religious and moral didacticism along with their spelling and reading lessons; Noah Webster's *An American Selection of Lessons in Reading and Speaking* (1795) contained texts that were chosen for their ethical emphasis; and McGuffey's *Readers* (1836–86) were also, according to Arthur Applebee, "decidedly moral...advocating a stern Protestant ethic" (p. 5). The definition of "ethics" embraced by these teachers and textbook authors was a function of their times, generally reflecting the cultural values of the dominant social class: white, European, male, Protestant, and middle class. Though the degree of explicitness with which ethics has been treated as a subject in classrooms has lessened over the years—due, in part, to the influence of Dewey's progressive education movement—many of the reading and writing texts published in this country through the 1990s have replicated the cultural and ethical assumptions of times past.

Recently, however, many of our perceptions about society, literacy, pedagogy, and writing have changed. Our canons have been modified, our conceptions of culture have diversified, our classrooms have become more politicized, and our notions of discourse have become more complex. Writing instruction, too, has broadened in scope, moving away from an authoritarian, teacher-centered, current-traditional paradigm to a process-oriented pedagogy that strives to be more student-centered, more collaborative, and more aware of diversity. Students are now being asked to write not only in English classrooms and first-year college composition courses, but also in writing centers, ESL classes, EOP programs, and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) courses. The multicultural, multiethnic, multipolitical, multisituated, and multidisciplinary nature of writing instruction has complicated discussions of the ethics or communally sanctioned ethical values that might be embraced by instructors and/or passed on to students. Yet, by the same token, this same diversity argues all the more strongly for a careful examination of the ethical concerns that are becoming more and more central to writing instruction. It is this purpose that this collection is intended to fulfill.

It is, of course, unrealistic to speak of "the" ethics of writing instruction as if such a monolithic, philosophical construct could ever be thoroughly articulated and then applied to specific situations. Ethics—like language—are a distinctly social phenomenon, and as such they are deeply immersed in the complex agendas, plans, programs, and vicissitudes of human interaction. Social theorists of discourse and language pragmatics, such as Bakhtin, Foucault, and Vygotsky, have offered compelling arguments that language and context interpenetrate one another, that meaning is dynamic rather than static, and that discourse can only be understood fully when considered in terms of its situational features and the complex network of overlapping texts, language practices, and rhetorical conventions from which it springs. It seems logical to conclude, by extension, that the *ethics* of writing instruction will be similarly situated, equally complex, and correspondingly problematic. Just as we must now speak of *multiple* literacies, *special purpose* literacies, and literacy in *particular contexts*, we must also think about the ways in which the ethics of writing instruction will be inflected by the *kind* of writing instruction we are talking about, the *institutional site* where the instruction is taking place, and the *pedagogical philosophy* that informs teaching practices and establishes priorities for student learning.

Contributors to *The Ethics of Writing Instruction* all show a keen awareness of the degree to which ethics and ethical systems are located in particular instructional contexts, and they consider the implications of these contexts from a variety of perspectives, both theoretical and pedagogical. Each of the contributors, too, displays a similar sense of how intricate and enigmatic ethics can be in instructional settings, however those settings are configured. And, to a person, they all exhibit strong convictions that ethics are a critically important feature of writing instruction on both the personal and professional level.

Though nearly all of the chapters in this text overlap and "speak to" one another as they consider the ethical issues of power, authority, agency, duty, responsibility, intervention, and evaluation which are central to writing instruction, I have chosen to cluster them into three major categories representing particular perspectives on the ethics that most concern writing instructors and writing instruction. These are Ethics and the Composition Classroom, Ethics and Specialized Writing Programs, and Ethics and the Profession.

In the first part, Ethics and the Composition Classroom, the contributors focus specifically on ethical issues that arise in classroom settings, particularly on issues of power, authority, agency, and political content. Guiding many of the authors in these articles are two important questions: "What, ethically, should my stance and/or position in the writing classroom be in relation to my students?" and "Should ethics be a part of what I *teach* students when I'm teaching them about writing?" Predictably, the answers to these questions reflect the authors' own experiences, histories, and perceptions of an instructor's role.

Several of the writers—Lisa Toner, John Ruszkiewicz, and William Thelin—turn their attention to the theoretical, pedagogical, and deeply ethical issue that has proven to be one of the most divisive in composition studies in recent memory: the so-called "politicized composition classroom." Influenced by the liberatory pedagogies of Paolo Friere, Ira Shor, and others, many contemporary writing instructors and theorists (Graff, Berlin, Knoblauch and Brannon, and so on) have come to question the supposedly "neutral" content of the first-year composition course and have seen the course instead as a covert—and possibly insidious—forum for replicating and reinforcing the dominant, discriminatory cultural values of a repressive, exclusionary political system. One response to this perceived indoctrination has been a movement to make the first-year composition course *explicitly* political, turning it into a "cultural studies" or "critical pedagogy" course in which students investigate the ways that language, imagery, and other icons of culture affect their perceptions and perpetrate political agendas.

Lisa Toner and John Ruszkiewicz, in Chapters 1 and 2, respectively, offer opposing views of the cultural studies composition course. Toner's chapter, "Pedagogical Ethics and the Cultural Studies Composition Course: Implications of a Discourse Ethics," presents a strong defense of the cultural studies/critical pedagogy approach to composition instruction. Referencing the work of Habermas as a way to account for the concerns of those who fear that cultural studies approaches are little more than disguised political agendas themselves, Toner argues that we need to strive for a "fair negotiation between the pedagogical aims and concerns of the teacher and the freedoms, interests, and responsibilities of each student." Discussing cultural norms and values in the composition class, she says, can serve important pedagogical goals in the writing class and need not lead to explicit indoctrination meant to serve one political agenda over another. On the other hand, Ruszkiewicz, in "Advocacy and Control in the Writing Class," explains why he sustains serious doubts about how truly open-ended and accepting cultural studies writing courses are likely to be. How neutral and ethical can a writing pedagogy be, he asks, when politics is the subject matter and there is such an obvious and unequal division of power between teacher and student in the writing classroom? In a scholarly yet personal and reflective essay on his own experiences with cultural studies programs and their proponents, Ruszkiewicz juxtaposes his own conservative values and concerns for student rights against those of writing teachers like Patricia Bizzell and Sharon Crowley who, in telling quotes, seem to advocate "[giving] up our liberal tolerance if we are to bring about social change through [captive students]."

William Thelin, in Chapter 3, "Advocating Language: An Ethical Approach to Politics in the Classroom," shares Ruszkiewicz's concern that a politicized writing classroom has the potential to become a class in political indoctrination, yet he also believes quite strongly that politics is an appropriate subject matter for first-year writing courses. Thelin believes it is possible to occupy a middle ground between Toner and Ruszkiewicz, and he argues that language study provides a safe position from which to confront political issues in writing classes without falling into the "advocacy trap." Arguing that linguistic approaches provide a relatively benign and neutral methodology for investigating controversial issues, Thelin contends that political topics can, ethically and productively, be incorporated into writing classrooms.

Andrea Lunsford, Rebecca Howard, Myrna Harrienger, and Nancy Uber-Kellogg pick up on one of the ethical threads that the cultural studies articles address, for the most part, only implicitly—the unequal power relationship between student and teacher—and they consider, among other things, the impact that relationship has on agency in student writing. In Chapter 4, "Refiguring Classroom Authority," Lunsford reflects on what it *means* to have authority in the classroom, especially in an age when postmodern scholarship has deconstructed many of our traditional notions of authority, agency, and the "author construct." If authority, as feminist scholars have contended, is an expression of "Western conceptions of authorship, of masculine, exclusionary individualism, and of power relationships as hierarchical and judgmental" (p. 69), then what sort of ethic can we substitute in its place, especially when students expect and in some cases depend upon those hierarchies being manifest in the classroom? Lunsford advocates an ethic of *responsibility* in the classroom, and she makes the case that teachers need to foster that ethic even in the face of student resistance.

Changing conceptions of the "author" and the "individual self" have also problematized our understandings of intellectual property, originality, and creativity. If we are social creatures—if our language, our discourse, and our communicative practices are all shaped by the texts, the talk, and the discourse we have been exposed to—then how does this affect our conception of plagiarism and the moral codes associated with ownership we have generally employed to condemn it as a practice? In "The Ethics of Plagiarism" (Chapter 5), Rebecca Howard investigates this question by retracing plagiarism's origins as a historical and textual concept and seeing how that concept is affected by our current perceptions of how writers learn the discourse of an unfamiliar discipline. If students do, indeed, learn to master a new discourse by "trying it on," by borrowing terms and concepts and argumentative constructs from existing texts, then teachers may need to rethink their own ethics of plagiarism and rethink as well how to communicate that ethics to their students.

Harrienger and Uber-Kellogg, like Lunsford and Howard, agree that postmodern thought has problematized concepts grounding issues of ethics: choice, obligation, responsibility, and, like Lunsford, they see that traditional configurations of classroom authority often work to subvert any attempts to empower students through writing. To resolve these problems, Harrienger and Uber-Kellogg stress the critical importance of instructor "stance" in Chapter 6, "An Ethics of Difference." The best and most ethical stance for instructors in writing classrooms, they argue, is one that enables ethical relationships with students by valorizing difference and "discursive exchanges" over the imposition of meaning and/or ideologies by one party or the other.

In Part 2, Ethics and Specialized Writing Programs, the focus turns to some of the unique ethical questions raised by writing programs intended to meet the needs of specialized student groups and discourse communities, programs such as writing across the curriculum and business and technical writing. Some of these ethical questions are theoretical, some are pedagogical, and some are administrative. In many cases, the contributors to this section challenge us to rethink our rationales for these writing programs, to reconsider the ethical stances we promote in our students' writing, and to remind us that ethics and ethical responsibility are central to writing no matter what the context, what the student group, what the discourse, or which writing pedagogy we ascribe to.

Larry Beason, for instance, takes a close look at the issue of "Composition as Service: Implications of Utilitarian, Duties, and Care Ethics," the title of Chapter 7. The connections between WAC and FYC (first year composition) have only rarely been articulated, says Beason, often leading to misunderstandings about what sorts of ethical duties each program has to the other. Is FYC obligated to be a service course that prepares students for the demands of WAC and specialized professional discourses, or does it have other, more important rhetorical responsibilities to students that transcend the presumed need to service WAC? By referring to teleological and deontological theories of ethics, Beason outlines what he believes are the mutual responsibilities of each program under both of these ethical frameworks.

Business and technical writing programs, like WAC, represent another type of specialized discourse that FYC programs are often expected to service or lead into. Business and technical writing, sometimes referred to as "professional writing" or "professional communication," has become, in some institutions, a distinct program of undergraduate (and graduate) study with its own goals, courses, and degree programs. The ethics of professional discourse in a business or technological environment is often an explicit component of these courses, with instructors highlighting the need for students to make careful judgments about what information they are obligated to include in professional documents in order to satisfy not only their organizational goals, but their civic responsibilities.

Cezar Ornatowski's chapter, "Ethics in Technical/Professional Communication: Making Better Decisions for a Complex World," makes a convincing case that ethical instruction may be more important in professional writing courses now than ever before. Recent social constructionist theories of meaning, which reveal the larger cultural entanglements of all discourse, coupled with current, well-publicized technological disasters, have given a new sense of urgency to the study of discourse ethics.

Part 3 of this volume, Ethics and the Profession, casts its gaze on the *business* of teaching writing and our place as professionals within that business. As professionals, we are expected to be teachers—to help students become better, more proficient writers. As professionals, we are expected to evaluate student writing—not just to help students improve, but also to fulfill an important gatekeeping function for our institutions and, presumably, society at large. As professionals, we are expected to be scholars and researchers—to contribute "new" knowledge to the field and publish that knowledge whenever possible. Sometimes these roles conflict; sometimes they present interesting ethical challenges all by themselves. Contributors to this section of the book, then, offer penetrating insights on the ethics of *doing what we do.*

Mary Trachsel, for example, contends in Chapter 9, "A Conflict of Personal and Institutional Ethics: Writing Instruction and Composition Scholarship," that the field of composition has become divided along gendered lines into a "dual context": the "feminine" private classroom and the "masculine" public forum of academic scholarship. One of the consequences of this division, she argues, has been that each area is now associated with a different set of ethical practices, and that the ethic of care—associated with teaching and the classroom—has been devalued while the ethic of rights—associated with scholarship and publication—has been increasingly honored. In her essay, Trachsel critiques this arbitrary division in the field, asserts "the moral legitimacy, even the centrality, of an ethic of care in the academy," and calls for renewed efforts to reintegrate teaching and scholarship in the field.

Michael Williamson and Brian Huot perceive a similar conflict between diametrically opposed ethical frameworks in the area of writing evaluation and assessment. Assessment psychometricians, they say, ground their epistemologies of evaluation in value-laden assumptions about "fairness." They work to develop "context-free" testing instruments that will provide "objective" rankings regardless of the cultural background or social history of the group being tested. Teachers, on the other hand, recognize that literacy instruction must take such cultural and social factors into account in order to develop effective pedagogies or even to evaluate student writing knowledgeably. In Chapter 10, "Literacy, Equality, and Competence: Ethics in Writing Assessment," Huot and Williamson unpack these oppositional ethical systems and, like Trachsel, consider ways in which the two can become mutually supportive.

Jane Detweiler, Bob McEachern, Jane Mathison-Fife, and Lauren Sewell turn their attention to the ways in which an instructor's personal ethics can affect evaluation. Since individual teachers enact different ethical systems in their classrooms, each incorporating distinct sets of pedagogical goals and values, consistent evaluation practices across instructors teaching the same course are difficult to achieve. In Chapter 11, "Exploring Our Ethics of Evaluating Student Writing," Detweiler and colleagues describe a collaborative method they have used successfully to make teachers' ethical agendas explicit and thereby refine their sense of "the individual and collective ethical values embedded in the meanings we make of student writing."

In Chapter 12, Peter Mortensen discusses "Going Public" in narratives of composition's history, focusing on our role as writing scholars and the sometime reductive ways we validate our current perspectives on writing by discrediting perspectives held in the past. In short, says Mortensen, we characterize our current practices as ethical because they conform to current theories of the writing process, while past practice is depicted as unethical because it failed to conform to our current understandings. This is a "serious problem," he claims, because it "overwrites more complicated histories of college writing instruction, histories that are local, numerous, and incommensurable." Reflecting on his own research into the history of literacy education in Kentucky, Mortensen builds a case for the importance of local studies of composition's "history," since those localized histories may reveal a "relational ethics" of writing and literacy instruction that paints a quite different picture of the field than we have come to know.

Finally, Miles Myers's chapter on "The Ethics of Public Review" provides a global view of the changing face of ethics in composition instruction. As we enter a new century and face a new set of political, economic, and demographic realities, Myers believes we may need to rethink our fundamental understandings of the profession's service ideals and ethical commitments. Changing circumstances and urgent needs may require us to alter our ethics of professional privatism, our ethics of the "rules" that govern speakers and topics, and our ethics of public disclosure.

In sum, then, the chapters in this volume recognize that different contexts, sites, and institutional goals will raise different sets of questions and judgments about what constitutes ethical writing instruction, ethical response to written texts, and ethical evaluation of a writer's process and products. They do not aim to resolve all the ethical questions that might arise in and about composition classrooms, but they present a panoply of views, arguments, and perspectives on what it means to talk about ethics in the writing classroom and thereby encourage writing teachers to consider the ethical dimensions of their own instructional practices.

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part I

Ethics and the Composition Classroom

chapter 1

Pedagogical Ethics and a Cultural Studies Composition Course: Implications of Discourse Ethics

Lisa M. Toner
Wheeling Jesuit University

Concerns about the role of ethics in writing instruction have taken shape rather forcefully in debates over the incorporation of "liberatory" or "emancipatory" pedagogies into writing instruction. These pedagogies take a variety of forms exemplifying bases in a range of Marxist and feminist political orientations and conceptions of language. Because of overtly political emphases, these approaches have been criticized soundly for failing to account for the role of the writing teacher and for ignoring the complexities of pedagogical ethics in writing instruction. In this chapter, I consider how the discourse ethics of critical theorists Jürgen Habermas (1990) and Seyla Benhabib (1992) can be used to understand the complex discursive responsibilities of writing teachers who explicitly advocate political views in the classroom by foregrounding these for students in both content selection and interpretative method. I suggest that, rather than dismissing questions about pedagogical ethics by stating that indoctrination simply does not occur (compare Berlin, 1993a, 1993b), teachers who make political advocacy part of writing instruction need to make explicit a discursive methodology that encourages students to feel that their opposing views will be respected. Discourse ethics suggests elements of a method that encourages participatory critical discourse in the classroom while requiring teachers to situate their political advocacies and interpretative predilections in relation to alternatives.

Discourse ethics does not shed much new light on the question of what good, fair writing teachers have always done in the classroom, such as enabling students to evaluate their own and others' views, feel a sense of meaningfulness through their self-assertion as writers, and believe in the power of writing to contribute to the life of a democracy. Rather, discourse ethics explains why indoctrination is not necessarily endemic to teachers' taking overt political stances in the classroom. Discourse ethics suggests that the ethics of teachers' political advocacy depends less upon matters of selecting content than upon methods of effecting dialogue in the classroom to enable discussion and critique of competing interpretative stances. However, discourse ethics provides a limited explanation of how teachers can achieve this kind of dialogue in the writing classroom because the theory assumes that all participants must share equal responsibility for participation. Because students and teachers are not equals in the classroom, I argue that responsibility for respecting conflicting interpretative methods and political advocacies lies first with writing teachers, then with students.

In their collection of essays in *Cultural Studies in the English Classroom* (1992), Berlin and Vivion observe that cultural studies approaches to writing instruction take many forms that disagree with each other. In general, these approaches draw upon Marxist and poststructuralist critiques of language practices and textual analyses to propose a mode of teaching writing that puts to the test what it means to speak and write within a democracy. These approaches, often linked with critical pedagogies of Freire and Shor, aim to enable students to recognize how writing practices—such as essays and newspaper articles, as well as other cultural texts like movies and advertisements—presuppose visions of a democratic society that, paradoxically, perpetuate exclusionary, discriminatory, and hierarchical social relations. Trimbur's "Cultural Studies and Teaching Writing" (1988) and Berlin's "Composition Studies and Cultural Studies: Collapsing Boundaries" (1993a) provide two possible visions of writing instruction as informed by the methods and questions of British cultural studies, particularly of the Birmingham Center for Cultural Studies. Here, I will provide a brief outline of a version Berlin proposes.

The cultural studies approach Berlin describes in a number of places (see, for example, 1992, 1993a, 1993b) combines the methods of critical semiotic analysis from the Birmingham Center for Cultural Studies in Britain (particularly Johnson and Hall) with the critical pedagogies of Shor, Giroux, and Aronowitz to posit a two-fold purpose to composition instruction. One purpose is to examine the ideological constructs of various discourses to determine ways in which they perpetuate and transform inequitable social practices based in race, class, and gender systems of privilege. A second purpose is to engage students in democratic dialogue that promotes disagreement and critique among participants, as well as agreement upon and support for shared concerns.

Toward these pedagogical ends, Berlin suggests that a writing teacher assign students exercises that analyze the privileging and hierarchizing operations of cultural codes found in students' everyday lives. As Berlin and Vivion explain (1992), these codes situate students as agents in certain kinds of "roles" that "form elements in larger economic, social, and political narratives" and provide expectations about an individual's experience (p. x). For instance, Berlin and Vivion identify the claims that "Only professional, middle-class men are suited for high political office" and that "Women do not work as hard as men and so should be paid less" as two such narrative codes. For writing assignments, Berlin suggests that students be asked to analyze a *Wall Street Journal* essay about life on a cattle ranch, which would ostensibly be ideologically "neutral" or "objective" to students, for ways in which this essay privileges the labor of men over women, the authority of the cowboss as manager over the cowhand-laborers, and cosmopolitan and corporate values over rural and agrarian ones. Berlin also suggests that students could analyze the codes and cultural values implicit in texts they take seriously as models of adolescent success, such as varsity sports or the popular 1984 movie *Sixteen Candles* (1992, 1993b). Performing these analyses thoroughly, Berlin maintains, enables students to understand how their options and roles in life are carved out and constructed by apparently unbiased, disinterested, and straightforward discourses.

Doing such analyses, Berlin (1993a) argues, is not aimed at reinforcing students' apathy toward taking responsibility for their own actions and engaging in their own lives—in a sort of "Why bother?" mentality. Rather, performing these ideological critiques is supposed not only to enable students to recognize practices that promote injustices, but also to help students identify ways they can resist these as well. Berlin writes that

> The effort [of a cultural studies approach] is to make students aware of cultural codes, the competing discourses that are influencing their formations as subjects of experience. Our larger purpose [as teachers] is to encourage students to resist and to negotiate these codes—these hegemonic discourses—to bring about more democratic and personally humane economic, social, and political arrangements. From our perspective, only in this way can they become genuinely competent writers and readers. (1993b, p. 146)

Engaging students in ideological analysis is predicated on the "hope" (Berlin, 1993b, p. 147) or premise that both teacher and students desire to see injustices changed. A cultural studies approach, as described by Berlin, thus relies upon the *possibilities* for bringing about two conditions, at least.

One is the possibility of democratic social structures in which all members of society are able to pursue happiness equally. The second is the possibility of democratic dialogue in which all participants are able to disagree with and critique freely the ideas of all other social groups and individuals, especially those that are oppressive and exclusionary. In Berlin's formulation, a cultural studies writing course thus relies upon a consequentialist ethical concern for attaining a society in which all members of society have equal opportunities through discourse to shape the conditions of their own experience. Berlin's view, as I noted, is one formulation among many; however, it is a useful one for identifying an underlying consequentialist ethic implicit in cultural studies approaches based in critical pedagogies (Toner, 1996).

However, because of their overt emphases on the political implications of rhetoric, cultural studies approaches to writing instruction have come under heavy criticism for lacking pedagogical ethics. In particular, critics of these openly political approaches to teaching writing question the extent to which a writing instructor's political beliefs and concerns ought to be made explicit in class discussions. Critics such as Maxine Hairston (1992) and Louise Phelps (1992) contend that overtly political approaches such as cultural studies effect an unbalanced, thus unfair, exchange of ideas between students and their writing instructor. Among the charges leveled against cultural studies approaches, for example, is that they afford writing teachers too much power and opportunity to determine what beliefs their students should hold and what issues they should write essays about and discuss in class.

Criticisms of cultural studies and other politically motivated (for example, feminist, deconstructionist) approaches suggest that methodologically these approaches provide little actual opportunity for students to question and challenge the politics of the writing teacher. That is, critics of these approaches point out that the fact that students do indeed, as Berlin says, "disagree rather than simply conform" with their teacher's political views (1993a, p. 53) does not mean that a pedagogical approach *per se* is ethical. That is, the fact of disagreement in the classroom says little about how the writing teacher, in particular, ought to deal with disagreement; nor does it say much about how students may be able to recognize and feel that disagreement is, indeed, legitimated by the teacher. Students rightly suspect a teacher's invitations to "feel free to disagree." Yet legitimating disagreement for the sake of disagreement alone can leave the teacher speechless, in a sense, with no alternative recourse to challenge or prompt a student to move beyond an "I'm entitled to my own viewpoint" mentality. This is particularly a concern when students voice overtly discriminatory or offensive remarks, and when they hesitate to assert their views for fear of unwillingly expressing negative cultural stereotypes.

Without a pedagogical means of drawing explicit attention to the process of disagreement and engagement that informs classroom discussion of values and attitudes, teachers risk creating a tyranny of views in the writing classroom, a place uniquely positioned to cultivate students' discursive authority. In this respect, critics like Phelps and Hairston argue that cultural studies approaches can be unethical in the relation they foster between teacher and student. Phelps, for example, charges that grounding composition instruction primarily in a teacher's overt desire to attain political ends assumes that writing teachers "are apparently in a position to make apparently autonomous, unconstrainedly strong political choices on behalf of students" and thereby reduces students to "means" by which teachers attempt to achieve their own political goals (1992, p. 17). Hairston supports Phelps's view in her charges that attempts to justify making the writing classroom sites of ideological critique "are no more than self-serving rationalizations that allow a professor total freedom to indulge personal prejudices and avoid any responsibility to be fair" (1992, p. 188). Stotsky (1992) adds that writing instruction aiming to examine political implications of discourse conflates concerns writing teachers have in their everyday—that is, personal—lives with those they have as public figures as teachers and intellectuals.

Ultimately, these critiques of overtly "politicized" writing instruction express concern that writing instruction based in an overt political agenda creates unethical discourse situations in the writing classroom. These critics suggest that rather than fostering a democratic discourse context —which, in these critics' view, seems to be one that promotes at best an unrestricted exchange of ideas among students and teacher— this kind of writing instruction brings about discourse situations "ripe for intellectual intimidation" (Hairston, 1992, p. 188), "inculcation" (Stotsky, 1992, p. 797), and "unconstrained projection of teachers' political visions into classroom discourse" (Phelps, 1992, p. 14). Phelps does not dismiss the importance of examining the political implications of discourse but identifies a need for "an ethic of our politics" (p. 14).

The debates about pedagogical ethics of cultural studies approaches raise several specific pedagogical ethical concerns: How can we as writing teachers involve our students in critiquing everyday discursive practices to discover ways they foster undemocratic and discriminatory social relations and practices? That is, how can we engage students in critiquing the ethics of language practices? More important, why ought we to do so, and how might we do so without simultaneously instantiating coercive discourse practices ourselves in our classrooms? Is it possible to have a noncoercive discourse situation, particularly in the classroom, wherein instruction does hope in some sense to enable students to think more broadly than before they entered the class? What conditions would be needed for this discourse situation? How can the cultural studies writing teacher attempt to bring this about?

As writing teachers, we need to examine further the place of ethics in writing instruction. To teach writing is to teach ethics. Porter (1993) observes that questions of ethics are intrinsic to writing instruction because "all writing has an ethical component: It aims for the good of somebody or something" and entails "a set of implicit understandings between writer and audience about their relationship" (p. 223). Faigley (1992) points out that writing instruction is an activity of constructing student agency—both political and ethical, and Miller (1989) argues that understanding rhetoric as a practical activity of arguing for a good in relation to a community enables us to recognize the important function of discourse in constructing ethics. Any pedagogical approach to teaching writing implies an ethic for writing instruction—how writing teachers ought to relate to students and their views, values, and attitudes. Any method for teaching writing also implies an ethic of how students ought to relate to audiences in their texts through the values, attitudes, and ethical reasonings they use.

For instance, Elbow, whose pedagogy Berlin classifies as "expressivist" in epistemology (1988, pp. 485–486), but which Elbow describes as "expressionistic" (1993, p. 65), emphasizes a care ethic of student–teacher relations that situates the writing teacher as a caregiver who supports students' views and encourages and challenges their efforts at constructing their own stances, which might conflict with those of others: in Elbow's words, "to teach well we have to be good hosts and good bouncers; we need skill as both ally and adversary" (1989, pp. 57–58) to foster students' efforts in "talking honestly and personally about one's own experience" (1993, p. 67). Consequently, Elbow's approach can teach students an ethic of writer–reader relations governed by the virtue of honesty to self, which takes priority over but does not necessarily neglect responsiveness to the critiques of others with different values. As Elbow explains, the "large-minded and hopeful" discourse between students and teacher to be encouraged in this approach "says, 'I believe *X* and you believe *Y*, and by gum we may well both be right—absolutely right" (1993, p. 71).

In contrast, the pedagogical ethics implied in Watt's *An American Rhetoric*, a textbook printed in five editions between 1950 and 1980, positions the writing teacher as impartial judge whose pedagogical advocacy takes the form of promoting the rules for "clarity," "economy," "appropriateness," and accuracy in expressing nonincendiary ideas (1980, pp. 8–13). In a statement that is somewhat out-of-touch with today's practices in public discourse, Watt warns student writers that "to many people, a 'controversial subject' may cloak a dangerous doctrine and a 'controversial figure' suggests sinister designs, questionable loyalty, or at least instability" (p. 149). Students learn from the teacher implied in Watt's textbook an ethic of advocacy that privileges impartiality and balance, clarity of reasons and diction, and restraint of emotion in expressing conviction.

In positing a relation among discourse participants, any approach to teaching writing also suggests how we as discourse participants ought to disagree with each other, how we ought to persuade others, and how we ought to avoid or not to avoid coercing them to our views. In teaching ethics, a given way of teaching writing implies procedures, attitudes, resources, and means for self-assertion as a relation to others' views, attitudes, needs, and selves. A writing course involves students and teacher in a process of defining and discovering an ethic for participating in discourse communities, and the discourse situation of a writing classroom provides a forum for negotiating conflicts among views. Writing instruction also teaches students, as Stotsky (1992) points out, how we as writers ought to be responsible to the knowledge we create, to the views we assert, and, I would add, for our visions of self, society, and others. Though these ethics undergird the discourse situation of any writing classroom, they simply become more visible in courses in which students discuss controversial or "politicized" subjects.

Cultural studies approaches should more openly incorporate these ethical, as well as political, dimensions of rhetoric and writing instruction as an integral part of their method and aim. What these approaches have is an implicit set of practices and assumptions that implies an ethical critique of written discursive practices outside the classroom in society. What these approaches need is a method of critiquing and of discussing ethics that allows for the expression and critique of a diversity of ethical positions in the writing class as well, including that of the teacher. To this end, the discourse ethics expounded by critical theorists Habermas (1990) and Benhabib (1989) provides a starting point for understanding and probing the role of ethics in cultural studies writing instruction.

DISCOURSE ETHICS

In Habermas's view, ethics is a process of evaluating social norms, which set out expectations governing social relations among individuals and groups; these norms are formed through our communication with each other, and we recognize and understand these expectations through language. In everyday life, according to Habermas, these social norms are tacitly understood and unproblematically accepted to be ethical, though, in fact, they might not be so. Habermas (1990) argues that a social norm is accepted as ethical in that people assume that it is "universalizable" or "*deserve*[s] recognition by *all*" who must comply with it and all who have interests affected by that compliance (original emphasis, p. 65). Specifically, Habermas suggests, we believe a social norm to be "ethical" in everyday life and, therefore, do not question it because we assume that reasons could be provided to show how universal adherence to that norm would foster social conditions in everyone's best interests (pp. 57–68). In this way, Habermas links, in our basic assumptions about social conditions and interactions with each other, the idea of ethical norms with that of an ethical society—that is, a true democracy, however ideally conceived. Habermas offers discourse ethics as a method for critiquing existing social norms to determine if, in fact, they should be considered ethical in these terms.

Discourse ethics is a dialogic procedural framework for making visible and critiquing reasons for a social norm so that we can determine if that norm—arising from within a specific social group— deserves to be recognized as "universalizable" in the interests of fostering a democratic society. Through discourse ethics, people from social groups with conflicting concerns, interests, and needs provide reasons for or against whether or not adherence to a norm would promote the interests, concerns, and needs of their social group and, implicitly, all members of society. Discourse ethics is a means for enabling social norms to be "intersubjectively recognized"—that is, dialogically critiqued—as ethical (Habermas, 1990, p. 61). Part of the ethical business of a cultural studies writing course, then, should be to foster our students' capacities for "intersubjective recognition" through the assignments we design and the rhetorical relations we establish with students in the classroom.

Participation in discourse ethics demands individuals take a stance beyond their own particular interests without at the same time abandoning those interests. Individuals must entertain the possibility that a given social norm—for example, men are the primary economic providers for a family—does not necessarily foster a society that mediates as well as possible everyone's best interests. This stance Habermas refers to as a "hypothetical" attitude, in contrast to a "norm-conformative" one that simply accepts practice of a norm as evidence of its ethicality (1990, pp. 158–159). According to Habermas, a hypothetical attitude disrupts a person's "naive acceptance" of a social norm in everyday practice. Through a hypothetical attitude, tacit acceptance of the universal benefits of a social norm can be questioned and thereby open to change. He writes that with this critical attitude

> [f]amiliar institutions can be transformed into so many instances of problematic justice. Under this gaze the store of traditional norms has disintegrated into those norms that can be justified in terms of principles and those that operate only de facto. The fusion of validity and social acceptance that characterizes the lifeworld has disintegrated. (p. 108)

A hypothetical attitude enables us to dissociate a tacit acceptance of the way things are from the way they might be.

In a cultural studies writing class, the process of engaging in a hypothetical attitude situates students to recognize not only ways in which social norms often determine social roles, and vice versa—that is, as Habermas states, how social norms structure "local conventions and [provide] historical coloration of a particular form of life" for individuals (1990, p. 109). Students are also poised to make conscious decisions about whether or not to change the norm, to negotiate conflicting reasons that shape it, and to choose among needs of interest groups affected by the norm. Students are positioned to construct an implicit vision of the kind of democratic society they wish to live in. Students do this, of course, with the knowledge that a democracy ought, in principle, to foster the interests of all groups equally. Writing teachers can help students negotiate these conflicts in their written texts by helping them to reflect the views of various groups in their arguments and to choose among a diverse and broad range of alternative and complex reasons in supporting their choices. Not all views will be as easily or as thoroughly capable of being developed as others. Writing teachers need to show students how some arguments may, in fact, be viewed as both ethically and rhetorically inadequate because of deficient attempts at being self-reflexive and self-critical, as well as other-centered in concerns and heterogeneous in preferences, voices, and appeals.

Discourse ethics requires that participants be willing to grant others with whom they disagree the opportunity to represent their views and possibly be ethically "right." The hypothetical attitude and procedure of discourse ethics necessitate that we be open to changing our views, in addition to trying to persuade others to our own. In her explanation of discourse ethics, Benhabib (1992) refers to this openness as attitudes of "egalitarian reciprocity" and "universal moral regard." These attitudes do not mean that everyone's view is equally ethical, a relativistic view of norms. Rather, everyone's view is open to being considered and critiqued, and everyone to being respected as a discourse participant. Using Habermas's notion of the ideal speech situation, Benhabib (1989) posits that "egalitarian reciprocity" is one of the primary ethical relations necessary to avoid coercive discourse situations: we must allow each other equal opportunity to voice concerns, particularly to critique power relations. As she states, we must allow

> equal chance to make assertions, recommendations, and explanations. All must have equal chances to express their wishes, desires, and feelings. And finally, within the situation of dialogue speakers must feel free to thematize those power relations which in ordinary contexts would constrain wholly free articulation of opinions and positions. (p. 150)

The burden for instantiating openness in this relation lies foremost with those in power positions over others, such as writing teachers in the classroom. That is, we have to allow ourselves to be open to critique and change of our views. This attitude of openness is also one that discourse ethics can foster in students with racist, homophobic, and other prejudiced views as well.

In the classroom, coercion and intimidation are an omnipresent threat, given unequal power relations communicated through institutional and social roles and constraints. To have any *hope* of avoiding coercion, we as discourse participants must couple our openness toward and willingness to engage in the inventiveness of dialogue with what Benhabib (1992) terms "universal moral respect" (p. 28) for others different from ourselves in experience and needs. We must have respect for each other as "unassimilated otherness," to use Iris Marion Young's phrase (1990, p. 227). The interrelationship among egalitarian reciprocity, universal moral regard, and noncoercive discourse situations Benhabib explains as

> the moral idea that we ought to respect each other as beings whose viewpoint is worthy of equal consideration and, furthermore, that we should treat each other as concrete human beings whose capacity to express this viewpoint we should enhance by creating, whenever possible, social practices embodying the discursive ideal. (1989, p. 152)

Together, these threads weave a fabric of the rhetorical ethic we ought to strive for in enabling our students to critique discursive practices in a cultural studies writing course. We must also use these to respond to our students' attitudes in classroom discussion and in their written texts to foster our students' sense of rhetorical responsibility and democratic citizenship.

Addressing the overtly utopian character of this ideal conversation and rhetorical relationship, Benhabib (1989) points out that it is not meant to be a complete guide to practice, but a means of critique to make participants fully aware of the power relations and to open up discursive space for the possibility of critiquing them. She acknowledges that

> Many consider this model hopelessly utopian and unreachable, but this is partly because the purpose of the discourse of legitimacy is not to draw a blueprint for a well-ordered society. Rather, the purpose is to develop a model of public dialogue such as to demystify existing power relations and the current public dialogue which sanctifies them. (p. 154)

Discourse ethics is a critical, rather than a constructive, act, yet it enables change by turning the power relations of dialogue on themselves, by drawing attention to them. Benhabib explains that "the ideal speech situation, or the 'discourse model of legitimacy,' is reflexive, that is, it allows radical self-questioning; it is critical, which is to say that it allows us to challenge precisely existing forms of power relations that hinder the conversation from being fair, just, and genuinely open" (p. 145).

Writing teachers play pivotal roles in enabling this critique to occur in terms of how they handle disparate and conflicting views in the classroom. As Benhabib (1989) notes, "the basis for respect can be disturbed if the conditions for developing a sense of self-worth and appreciation from others are lacking" (p. 152). That an expressionist approach to writing appeals to an openly respect-giving ethic of the writing teacher partly explains its widespread appeal to both teachers and students. Cultural studies writing teachers can learn from this attitude how to facilitate critique and respond to students' views in the classroom and try to avoid making students feel, in Hairston's words, "intellectually intimidated" (1992, p. 188) or, in Stotsky's terms, "inculcated" (1992, p. 797). Teachers can set the groundwork for developing this respect by making available to students a variety of conflicting views and by openly providing critiques of their own views as well.

In discourse ethics and the ideal speech situation, consensus and dissensus are mutually entailing and necessary as possibilities. The possibility for achieving consensus free from coercion and reification of power structures is what motivates participation in discourse ethics. Summarizing Habermas's views on consensus, Steuerman writes that, in his view, "language is the promise and possibility of realizing this agreement" (1992, p. 105). However, this possibility for achieving uninfluenced agreement, like the attitude of discourse ethics, is hypothetical. Dissensus is an integral part of it. As Benhabib explains, "To assent [freely] entails just as much the capacity to dissent, to say no" (1989, p. 153). Trimbur's (1989) interpretation of this relationship is helpful: "We need to see consensus, I think, not as an agreement that reconciles differences through an ideal conversation but rather as the desire of humans to live and work together with differences" (p. 615). A discourse situation risks becoming coercive when it does not maintain a balance between consensus and dissensus.

In practice, the relationship between consensus and dissensus is disrupted and chanced whenever any participant speaks or writes, critiques or agrees with others, however provisionally—that is, whenever we engage in dialogue. The discourse situation of a cultural studies writing classroom that incorporates discourse ethics evidences the tenuousness and significance of this relationship between consensus and dissensus, coercion and freedom. As writing teachers, we need to design assignments that enable students to identify and negotiate points of consensus and dissensus among themselves, with us, and with others. Using Habermas's notion of the ideal speech situation, Trimbur (1988) finds this dynamic between consensus and dissensus central to the process of collaborative learning. He writes that "Under the utopian aegis of consensus, students can learn to agree to disagree, not because 'everyone has their own opinion,' but because justice demands that we recognize the inexhaustibility of difference and that we organize the conditions in which we live and work accordingly" (p. 615). Like consensus, dissensus must be viewed as an unfolding process, not as an endpoint attained.

To see how the procedural and attitudinal ideas in discourse ethics and the ideal speech situation can foster students' rhetorical-ethical awareness in a cultural studies writing course, I have assigned my students in first-year writing a sequence of analytical essays that asks them to examine a campus or local issue and speculate upon the positions of various groups affected by it. This assignment sequence was originally designed by Karin Evans and Joanne Addison as part of the developmental writing curriculum at Purdue University. Many of my students choose to write about the university's dormitory visitation policy, which allows no visitors (including parents) to rooms before noon daily or after midnight on weeknights and 2:00 a.m. on weekends. As would be expected, most students find this policy very restrictive and unfair, and they argue that it treats them as children instead of as responsible adults. Freshmen in particular adopt this argument easily, in part, with full awareness that the required weekly seminar called "first-year program" constantly emphasizes their taking "responsibility" for themselves. Students' attitudes toward the policy are made with full awareness that the policy operates within a Roman Catholic college. The policy itself is differently enforced for the men's and women's dorms in that the latter have a 24-hour security guard, whereas the former have a student desk worker after 6:00 p.m.

My students complete three assignments for this project, each using elements of discourse ethics in different ways. In the first paper, students hypothesize what economic, social, political, legal, ethical, and personal interests each group might be trying to sustain and protect in advocating their respective views. In this paper, a student writes as a member of one of the groups who is trying fairly to compare and contrast connections and differences among the interests and positions of the groups. In doing so, each student identifies points of possible consensus and dissensus among the groups' ethical concerns as well. In the second paper, students present results of surveys they have designed to gather the actual opinions of one of the groups. Typically, students survey other students in the hopes of gathering information that will support their views. In this paper, students test the diversity of opinion—consensus and dissensus—within a given group. In a third assignment, students write persuasive letters to a campus decision-maker to advocate some form of action on the issue. In this letter, students employ discourse ethics by explaining how the visitation policy, for example, prevents them as members of a given social group (students, adolescents, young adults, women, men) from pursuing their aspirations and needs. In addition, students use discourse ethics by having to anticipate critiques of their own recommendations for the policy and by having to consider how their attitudes reflect responses to the concerns of different groups.

Engaging in the principles and procedure of discourse ethics, the first assignment requires students to imagine other possible concern groups and to distance themselves from their own arguments and reasonings about the visitation policy. Students thereby can adopt a "hypothetical attitude" that enables them to recognize alternative justifications for the policy, some of which they conclude serve the best interests of themselves and the community, whereas others they recognize as being motivated by the economic, political, and social interests of the college and its personnel. Development of this capacity for imagining and respecting the difference of others is reinforced in the next assignment, in which students write up their survey results. Many students are surprised to find that not all students think the way they do and that there is a variety of opinions on, for example, the policy's benefits and weaknesses and whether or not the policy should be changed.

The ability to engage in a hypothetical attitude is further refined and tested to its limits as students attempt in their letters to implement change within current institutional structures. Some students are unable to find a space for responding to the concerns of others and simply present, as they did early in the semester, their own arguments in a "take-them-or-leave-them" fashion. Other students are unable to find a space for their own views and believe that change will be unlikely, an attitude admittedly fostered and reinforced by the institution's members. Yet others are able to find a space for both themselves and others in their letters, voicing the concerns and needs of students while situating their calls for change within the college's concerns. The pedagogical aim for a cultural studies writing course using discourse ethics is to view this activity as a rhetorical-ethical process of negotiating consensus and dissensus that may in any given case result in change for the better, though such change will not necessarily occur. Though this fact is somewhat disappointing and disillusioning, leading to what Patricia Bizzell (1990) identifies as student apathy and numbness, making available the possibility for change positions students as rhetorical and ethical change-agents, typically a new educational as well as community-engaged stance.

Completing assignments that analyze the competing interests at stake in positions on an issue helps students to recognize that rhetorically and ethically some arguments are more complex and address more fully the concerns of more people and social groups than do others. Many students observe that college policy is shaped by many factors and conflicting obligations, including church policy, parents (hence, economics), and public opinion. Some also come to understand, in some sense, that unlimited personal freedom (in the dorms, for instance) can affect the ability of a community to interact and operate beneficially for all. In writing their letters to decision-makers, many students ultimately propose extending visitation hours to include overnight stays on weekend nights and to exempt parent visitors from the policy. Some also recognize the complexities of responsibly dealing with roommates under a policy of overnight visitation.

Using Kohlberg's stages of ethical growth, Habermas suggests that the transformation from a "norm-conformative" attitude—that submits to a norm without questioning its value—to a "hypothetical" one can be viewed developmentally (1990, pp. 125–127). He explains that at this transition point to a hypothetical attitude a person can take two courses of action: to reproduce former, established values systems or to transform critiqued norms into a new ethical framework. Habermas observes that

> If the adolescent cannot and does not want to go back to the traditionalism and unquestioned identity of his past world, he must, on penalty of utter disorientation, reconstruct, at the level of basic concepts, the normative orders that his hypothetical gaze has destroyed by removing the veil of illusions from them. (p. 126)

In the first paper, not all my students are able to make a leap to the hypothetical attitude and, instead, explain the views of other groups in ways that simply support their own views. These students' papers are written mainly from the viewpoint of persuasion that excludes recognition of the legitimacy of others' concerns. Writing instruction rhetorically enables this ethical transformation to a hypothetical attitude, but it might fully not occur within the time span of a semester. This transformation takes place in conjunction with students' other learning and lived experiences outside our course. Composition is an important facilitator in this process.

The dialogue entailed in bringing discourse ethics into writing instruction might—and often does—require students to change their views, as they try to broaden rhetorical and ethical concerns to include others more fully. Habermas notes that discourse ethics and argumentation do not ensure "impartiality of judgment but *freedom from influence* or *autonomy in will formation*" (original emphasis,1990, p. 71). A student might choose to stake out a wholly impractical and egotistical position in her letter to decision-makers, a process that nonetheless makes her conscious of choices to privilege some values and concerns and ignore others. Some students will no doubt be more readily open than others to changing their views and attitudes and incorporating those of others in the process of "autonomous will formation." Some will continue to argue that the visitation policy ought to be changed because, basically, no one follows it anyway. Teachers need to model this change and openness and help students negotiate in their written texts conflicting values and concerns. This negotiation will often require students to reason differently.

Discourse ethics cannot remove the problem of power from the cultural studies writing classroom. Steuerman (1992) critiques Habermas's notion of discourse ethics and the ideal speech situation for assuming that rhetorically "freedom from influence," in his terms, is possible, yet his view of that discourse situation does not account for instances of "day-to-day communication, where communication is not synchronic, not transparent and not explicit" (pp. 105–106). Discourse ethics can only make unequal power relations more visible and, therefore, make conditions that reinforce them open to critique. The rhetorical situation of the writing classroom fostered through discourse ethics points to the ethical role of the writing teacher and makes available to students critique of her views, authority position, and institutional role in the classroom. Students' willingness to engage in dialogue with the teacher about her view can be facilitated by the teacher's ability and willingness to be changed by, as well as to recognize, a student's oppositional views. As Bizzell notes, "provisionality and openness comprise avenues whereby the values-avowing teacher can be changed by persuasion emanating from his or her students" (1994, p. 195).

Whether or not a student decides to critique his teacher's views varies with his comfort level in speaking out in class and in writing, his rhetorical ability and psychological readiness to negotiate conflicting viewpoints, and his felt sense of the possibility for influencing the teacher's views. Many students may feel that their only "noncoercive" or "safe" discourse space for critiquing the teacher–student power relation and classroom discourse situation is through course evaluations, as many feminist and other politically "upfront" teachers have felt (compare Bauer, 1990, pp. 385–386). Course evaluations are an institutionalized opportunity for students to address and invert the inevitable power imbalance in the classroom, as any teacher has likely felt.

A cultural studies writing teacher must, to some extent, expect negative and critical responses in evaluations and be suspicious when they do not occur. Borrowing Foucault's critique of Habermas's views, Cooper (1991) observes that Habermas's conception of argumentation—and implicitly discourse ethics—suffer from an epistemological problem in that argumentation provides no means for preventing those in power from using reasons to legitimize oppressive and marginalizing practices and policies. This is the problem of the relationship between rhetoric and ethics: ethical appeals can be used toward bad ends. As writing teachers, we should be concerned when students feel that we do "not spend time discussing the comments that oppose" our views and use a strategy that "twists them [that is, critiques] to support" our positions instead (qtd. in Bauer, 1990, p. 388). Enabling students to recognize the limitations of their own views in terms of the values they would like to espouse, as Bizzell (1990) suggests, and positioning them to believe our possibly more inclusive and complex views, is not the same as using their views to support ours. We need to take the initial step to critique limitations of our own views in turn. As writing teachers, we must also identify ways to obtain evaluation comments that assert our fairness and concern for students.

One potential cross-check against our biases would be to have several students (not all) work on the same community issues in order to give ourselves, as writing teachers, a range of student writing on those issues. Doing this, we can obtain various student arguments and positions on a single issue and thus be able to identify differences among students' views and to show difference in our responses to them. We need to situate our differing responses to student writing by situating that writing within its own diversity. Students should, of course, be able to determine the community issues they prefer to work on.

We could also share with students our criteria for grading and for evaluation. A colleague once commented to me, on a committee to develop grading standards for a writing course, that he did not want to share these criteria with students precisely because doing so would give them means to challenge his evaluation of their texts. Maintaining the mysteriousness of grading practices—keeping them as privatized practice—can be one key way for writing teachers to stabilize their power as rhetorical authorities in the classroom. Trimbur observes that

> the Habermasian representation of consensus as a counterfactual anticipation of fully realized communication offers students a critical tool to identify the structures of power which determine who may speak and what may be said. But more important, this notion of consensus also offers students utopian aspirations to transform the conversation by freeing it from the prevailing constraints on its participants, the manipulations, deceptions, and plays of power. (1989, p. 614)

Sharing with students criteria for each assignment situates these criteria as matters of presumed agreement, of "consensus as a counterfactual anticipation of fully realized communication." Grading criteria function as "constraints on" students' legitimate participation in our classes. Students' critique of these criteria disrupts this presumed consensus and, simultaneously, a view of the writing classroom as an idealized and absolutely free communicative space in which anyone can say whatever he or she feels in whatever way he or she likes. This exposition of the "rules of discourse" (Habermas, 1990, p. 71) in a writing class positions students, in Susan Wells's words, to "treat the themes of domination, of reification, of the humane handling of private discourse, under the rubric of the 'rightness' of communication" (1986, p. 265) in our classrooms. Students will have means to identify exclusionary practices in our classrooms and critique our notions of "who may speak and what may be said" (Trimbur , 1989, p. 614). We need to be careful in setting up our grading criteria: these need to allow and respect a multiplicity of perspectives, while ensuring that those perspectives respect difference in turn.

What, then, might be bases by which a writing teacher might make a judgment against and unequivocally critique a student's view? According to what criteria may a writing teacher exclude or deem as "unethical" forms of student participation in the classroom? At what point should a writing teacher draw lines around the conversation and oppose a student's voicing her or his concerns from within the situatedness of his or her own group? As Lyotard and Thebaud observe in *Just Gaming* (1985), the ability of discourse to generate opposing or conflicting criteria, and to use these criteria as appeals for self-serving but not necessarily other-concerned ends, in effect leaves those who must make judgments without ultimate criteria. Lyotard notes that because any assertion of criteria is, at once, an assertion of the possibility of agreement about criteria, as well as an infinite deferral of this possibility, all judgments are made, in effect, on a "case-by-case" basis (pp. 25–27). Further, any judgment by the teacher sets up expectations for the treatment of that teacher as well, a condition Lyotard describes as "paganism," which arises "whenever there is this very curious representation wherein he who states the just is himself caught in the very sphere of language as those who will be the recipients of his prescriptions, and may eventually be judged by the judge" (p. 28). About as closely as we can approximate these criteria for judging a students' view is, I think (following Benhabib's arguments), continually to define and redefine what it means to respect others as discourse participants while remaining open to the voicing of multiple perspectives.

Any student or teacher comment or action that undermines the basic communicative relationship of respect in the classroom ought to be identified and critiqued as such—that is, as a voicing of disrespect, not only for the teacher but for the participatory discursive context of the classroom itself. For instance, a colleague of mine recently struggled over the question of how to respond to a student who had stated upon leaving class one day, "This class is stupid. It's like high school"; by most accounts, this is a relatively benign comment. Her course in American literature is the course, among several alternatives, most widely chosen by students to fulfill the university-wide literature requirement. My colleague was troubled over how to respond to this comment. From the perspective of discourse ethics, she should address the remark as an iteration of disrespect for the classroom discourse community, as well as for her as the teacher, which is not the same issue for disrespecting her as a person. This is a situation in which the power position of the teacher should be used to discuss, define, and possibly reconfigure students' and the teacher's conception of the classroom as a space in which views, ideas, and attitudes are exchanged. She and her students could briefly discuss on what terms the teaching of and discussion about literature was occurring and toward what ends. In turn, she could, as teacher, also acknowledge the situated position of the student: the work may seem repetitious, tedious, and difficult. Such a change in the conversation procedure would foreground a possibly dialogic relation between student and teacher and displace tacit assumptions about the discursive context of the classroom as simply information transfer, as a one-way economic exchange.

This displacement will no doubt be temporary and migratory. That particular student's attitudes or opinions—and those of other students—will not necessarily be changed, and if changed, will not remain so throughout the semester. Moments of reciprocity and the process of working toward reciprocity in dialogue are probably the best that can be hoped for, given the potency of institutional roles and constraints. The teacher's action in this case is confrontational, but not in a political sense: "I am the authority who knows about the subject matter and you don't." Rather, this action is confrontational in the sense of rhetorical ethics, using the power of the "teacher" position to challenge students' tacit beliefs in that power's bases: Should they be in domination or respect? If the latter, then what roles and attitudes must students assume? Student comments such as "This class is stupid" must be seen as expressions of situated concerns, which assume and react to already established discursive roles and relations, as well as histories of experience with the subject matter. The framework of discourse ethics suggests that teachers treat such comments as opportunities to discuss and critique these assumptions and the notions of respect they entail.

CONCLUSION

Although discourse ethics does not provide a sufficient explanation of how to have absolutely noncoercive discourse in actual writing classrooms, it does provide a way to begin understanding how writing teachers can *try* to establish classroom discourse situations that avoid indoctrinating students into the ethical and political views of the teacher yet still engage students in critical discussion of everyday discourse practices. As a critical method, discourse ethics foregrounds debate of ethical values and implied social relations through the critique of reasons and assumptions informing a proposed action or argument. As a procedure to get at a critical standpoint, discourse ethics positions students and teachers not only to critique power relations and consequences implied in a proposed action or argument, but also to question the power relations and consequences of the classroom discussion itself. Bringing discussion of ethics into cultural studies writing instruction through the use of discourse ethics involves students and teacher in struggles to articulate respect despite, within, and in opposition to differences.

We need to find ways to address the concerns of both students and administrators regarding our ambiguous authority by continuing to explore the ethical role of writing instruction in humanities education. Bringing discourse ethics into a cultural studies writing course shifts the aim of composition instruction away from the political transformation and motivation of students to involvement of students and teachers in a cooperative effort to explore the vital role of discourse in shaping social relations and defining ethics. Use of discourse ethics in a cultural studies writing class makes explicit for both students and teachers an awareness of a writer's need for careful and sensitive adaptation of discourse not only to the particular audience for a text, but also to the larger needs and concerns of society. In participating in discourse ethics, students and writing teachers become directly mindful that every language act defines how we should relate to each other and who we believe we ought to be.

Making discourse ethics a method in cultural studies writing instruction situates composition classrooms as sites of social change by asking both students and teachers to reflect on how they construct themselves and how they are positioned by others as rhetorically ethical agents. As writing teachers, we need to see writing instruction as activities in rhetorical ethics and in democracy. To do this, we as writing teachers need to be sensitive to any situation in which our students are too agreeable, too antipathetic, or too antagonistic toward us and our views. And vice versa.

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chapter 2

Advocacy in the Writing Classroom

John Ruszkiewicz
University of Texas at Austin

> ...there could hardly be a more unbearable—and more irrational—world than one in which the most eminent specialists in each field were allowed to proceed unchecked with the realization of their ideals.
>
> —Friedrich Hayek (1944)

What's wrong with college teachers using writing courses to propagate their political beliefs? After three drafts of an essay that attempted to answer this question, I found myself unable to come to satisfactory terms with the subject without slipping into precisely the sort of academic jargon that makes politicizing the classroom seem plausible, abstractions about *oppressive and dominant postures, demagogic tactics, ideological dispositions,* and *paradoxes in the sociological argument.* Instinctively, I sense the issue ought not be raised at all. It's a question framed to appall the few nonacademics reading our anthologies or journals—we must seem like psychiatrists asking, "What's wrong with dating patients?"

I sense, too, that the best arguments against politicized classrooms have always been obvious and have already been made, though perhaps not heard well enough. I can hardly improve upon what Patricia Bizzell (1992), Richard Marius (1992), and Louise Whetherbee Phelps (1992) offer in an *ADE Bulletin* triptych on classroom advocacy. In "A Constrained Vision of the Writing Classroom," Phelps warns that "recent composition theory paves the way for a pedagogy that treats students as vehicles for political action by others who know better than they do what is good for them and society" (p. 17). Informed by an ethic of care developed by Nel Noddings, Phelps argues for a balanced sensitivity to differences "between teaching for the sake of the student and teaching for the sake of a future society." As a writing program administrator, Phelps recognizes that, unlike the political visionary, she must act within an environment constrained by practical realities and local concerns, "looking for prudent trade-offs" (p. 19). Phelps' refusal to take liberatory postures strikes me not as timidity, but as maturity and professionalism, warning as she does "that some of us might come to trust our own political analyses and our utopian visions more than students' potential to become their best selves and to contribute to society in ways we do not predict or control" (p. 17).

Richard Marius (1992) arrives at essentially the same conclusion in "Politics in the Classroom." "A course should not be like an inquisition," he asserts, "in which the object is to get our students to confess their feelings about a particular moral issue so that, in the happy ending, those with the wrong opinions abjure and repent" (p. 9). Like Phelps, Marius expresses a faith in education and students that makes political machinations in the classroom seem self-indulgent: "There is life after college, and if we teach gently and well, we give students the power to correct themselves. I think most of them will" (p. 11). In a truly better world, good sense would prevail at this point, and our profession might move on to other matters.

But Marius and Phelps have, inevitably, been challenged, and Maxine Hairston has similarly had her provocative essay, "Diversity, Ideology, and Teaching Writing" (1992)—wherein she wonders whether students might not be better off learning to write in writing classes—rebutted by an entire NCTE-sponsored collection, *Pedagogy in the Age of Politics* (Sullivan & Qualley, 1994). In the same agonistic mode, I spent two of three earlier drafts of this piece assailing a critic of Marius and Phelps—Dennis Lynch (1995), who finds a rationale for progressive politics in the very nature of rhetoric, which, he argues, can survive as a discipline only if people are guaranteed an equal hearing and a right to be understood. This intriguing proposition pulled 10 pages of analysis, citation, refutation, and bluster from me before I abandoned the file and opened yet another: Draft 4.

But what then stopped me cold was a question I realized I'd never bothered to ask myself, though I remember Stephen M. North wrestling with something like it in 1991: Why don't *I* want to teach politics in my writing classes? Surrounded by faculty and graduate students energized by their progressive pedagogies and committed to a profession that has invented rationales for classroom advocacy for more than a decade, why don't I feel the same tug my colleagues do to use writing courses to change the world?

I quickly reread North's essay, "Rhetoric, Responsibility, and 'the Language of the Left'" (1991), from a collection entitled *Composition and Resistance.* Yet North doesn't seem much into resistance; in fact, it is hard to tell from the article exactly what North's politics might be. He concludes his piece suggesting that he and the left may be on the same side or on different sides or perhaps they have different goals but can share the same tactics. Perhaps North just isn't a political person—and on that score we probably differ. I've been a fairly active conservative for 25 years, I've co-edited an anthology for writing classes (Ruszkiewicz, *The Presence of Others* [1997]) that explains my political views, and I've been a fellow of the Heritage Foundation. But I have no desire, no inclination at all, to make "Writing About Family Values," or "Writing About Personal Responsibility," or "Writing About Reagan" into topics for the freshman courses I teach. I'm even uneasy using my own anthology in class, though it is scrupulously balanced by readings selected by my devoutly liberal coeditor Andrea Lunsford.

Somewhat like North, I find myself uncomfortable exploring the question of the politicized classroom in personal terms. Yet my very resistance probably warrants the examination. Though I'm far from alone in opposing politicized writing classrooms, I speak only for myself here and hope my experiences resonate with those of others.

Right from the start, colleagues on the left will probably dismiss my aversion to politicized classrooms on the grounds that conservatives such as I naturally prefer the status quo. Fully invested in the capitalist rationales that sustain even institutions of higher learning, we've got a clear stake in preserving existing social and political hierarchies. Bottom line: to pay for the house and the Grand Cherokee, I've got to keep students believing there's a point to subject/verb agreement and Toulmin argumentation. For if students ever figure out that everything I routinely ask them to do, know, say, and write has been mandated by "the System" to serve its greedy, chop-down-the-last-redwood ends, they might attain critical consciousness, engage in resistance themselves, and bring down the whole house of cards, putting altruistic progressive academics in charge. And the progressives may even have a point—at least those still committed to sweeping away capitalism entirely. In the political West today, after the implosion of the Soviet Empire and the economic retreat of most Western European welfare states, leftists do have a tougher case to argue than someone like me, convinced that relatively unfettered capitalism creates more prosperity and freedom than centralized command economies.

But the academy is not society in general and in many academic environments, particularly in colleges of liberal arts or humanities, the prevailing assumptions are vastly different. In these enclaves, capitalism is portrayed as a relentless (but paradoxically doomed) system responsible for oppressing women, minorities, Third World nations, the poor, the different, and the ubiquitous *other.* So capitalism becomes an opportune target for courses, seminars, workshops, study groups, film societies, web sites, and other campus clusters dedicated to anatomizing its contradictions and hypocrisies. Within the higher education community, then, conservatives are very much on the defensive and, ironically, often share the same conviction as progressives that students need to have their eyes opened to alternative realities. Obviously, academics invested in an economic system under withering attack have cause to defend it—and classrooms certainly offer tempting platforms for mounting such defenses. So on a typical college campus today, conservatives would seem to have as much reason for advocacy in their courses as progressives.

But even the argument that conservatives feel comfortably in command is deeply flawed. Indeed, I'd argue that conservative academics, cut off from institutional power at most universities and denied equal access (until fairly recently) to many channels of communication, have been far more embattled during the past 30 years than most white liberals and progressives; Jeffrey Herf (1995) overstates the case only slightly: "Nothing is as deadly to an academic career in the humanities and social sciences as to be labeled a conservative" (p. 151). In universities steered by bureaucracies implementing state and federal mandates for diversity, dominated by multicultural programs and constituencies, and awash in curricula and programs designed around leftist agendas (colonial and cultural studies; peace studies; queer studies), I find little reason for right wingers to feel more empowered than leftists do. While the left remains more deft at dramatizing its sense of oppression, the right today has almost as many constituencies, off campus and on, feeling displaced, alienated, and unloved. Yet I don't hear conservatives suggesting classrooms be used to correct existing political imbalances—yet.

Maybe I have no stomach for playing the advocate in my classes because I haven't experienced first hand the kinds of prejudice or hatred that drives leftists to raise the political consciousness of their students. I am, after all, a well-paid, middle-aged, tenured white male at a big state research institution. But so are many of my left-wing colleagues—just as male, white, and privileged. And most of the female theorists on the left I know are equally well-situated, pink, and comfortable—and far less guilty about it than the men. At least I can claim an urban, working-class background, but that's the experience of at least two leftists I've sparred with—so upbringing in this case has no predictive value when it comes to pedagogy. I am where I am by fortune, circumstances, and accomplishments no greater or less than those of colleagues who read the world much differently. I know prejudice up close at least as well as most of them, in fact, I suspect somewhat better. Yet I feel no imperative to use my classroom to change the way things are because of the way my life has been.

Perhaps I just don't know as much about politics as my leftist colleagues or don't grasp the subtler implications of critical theory impelling some writing teachers to reconceptualize literacy. But I have kept up with the journals, read the theory, endured almost every recent anthology about politics and writing from MLA, NCTE, Boyton/Cook, and other publishers. I've experienced big league academic politics close up too, as one of four English faculty to oppose a curriculum focusing on *difference* at the University of Texas. So I've heard all the arguments for making writing classes sites for political struggle—sometimes shouted at me, sometimes whispered quietly in my office along with warnings about "threats to your career." I understand the rules of the game, recognize the players, and know it's hardball the left is playing. And still I am unmoved by liberatory classrooms or any potential conservative riposte.

Perhaps I don't feel my politics with quite the passion that proponents of liberatory and social rhetorics do. And there may be a reason for that. If conservative academics in the humanities have an intellectual advantage over their more liberal co-workers, it's that most are vastly better read in liberal perspectives than leftists are in conservative thinking. This superiority has nothing to do with conscientiousness; rather it is the expression of a political reality liberals ought to relish—minorities have no choice but to master dominant discourses. Because they are deeply familiar with alternative views, academic conservatives tend more than leftists to read the political landscape rhetorically, appreciating liberal and leftist positions as plausible and arguable alternatives to the views they prefer. Most conservatives can even imagine intelligent people choosing to be liberal, something most leftists refuse to believe about conservatism. How else can Reed Way Dasenbrock (1996) write in *College English* without qualification or fear of editing that one "disastrous" consequence of the left's critique of liberalism is that "in the larger culture the successor to Adlai Stevenson hasn't been anyone on the left but Newt Gingrich *and those who think like him*" (emphasis added, p. 551). Clearly, no academics at all would think like conservatives without ample cash infusions from the Olin or Coors Foundations (Lauter, 1995).

Still I believe that most leftist writing instructors teach little differently from conservatives when they configure their classrooms as forums where students encounter challenging ideas, fully and fairly expressed. Here, I differ slightly with Maxine Hairston (1992), who argues that writers need a protected environment in which to grow and so should compose only on subjects they choose: "Few students," Hairston observes, "will do their best when they are compelled to write on a topic they perceive as politically charged" (p. 189). I consider political topics thoroughly appropriate in writing courses and think it healthy for students and teachers to confront vibrant political ideas that challenge their opinions and prejudices. Indeed I am buoyed by a growing sense among compositionists that a writing course can be a place where students exercise their responsibilities as literate citizens examining the ways that language can be used to influence and shape public thinking (Wells, 1996). To locate writing courses within the public square and to prepare students to be articulate and powerful citizens are sensible, responsible and, I would argue, conservative goals for writing instructors, even if advocates of related service learning pedagogies, seem inevitably to frame their projects as "issues of power, oppression, and exclusion" (Schutz & Gere, 1998, p. 147). But I do insist that both students *and* teachers enjoy a level playing field within the realm of "civic writing," exploring domains unsetted and unsettling to both. And that may be, finally, the deep reason I don't use my classroom to promote *specific* political views or philosophies: I am not so steeped in my political beliefs that everything I do professionally must be shaped by them, nor do I think it is my mission to recast the political lives of my students.

I can too easily imagine powerful and defensible alternatives to any political proposition I might privilege or disparage in a writing classroom. For example, I fully expect that multiculturalism, in the long run, will prove a disastrous philosophy for American education and society. But I would not design an undergraduate writing course to prove, advance, or privilege this thesis because students need to consider other views. And I could be wrong about multiculturalism; my colleagues think I am. Even in my most determined foray into cultural studies—a class called "The Automobile in American Culture"—I avoid a specific political orientation. So Critical Mass bicycling activists might find as much to think and write about as their classmates who covet gas-guzzling sport utilities. And that range of possibilities pleases me mightily. For when questions have a preferred answer or issues a single dimension, they cease to be vital material for a rhetoric or writing course.

Does this mean that instructors who prefer that writing courses expound political agendas and "teach virtue" must be more confident about their politics and ethics than I am? That would seem to be the case. And, indeed, proponents of liberatory rhetoric do sometimes sound to me like true believers—persons willing to suggest that the classroom can be a place where "pain and rage lead to new revelation" (Fishman & McCarthy, 1996, pp. 342–343). Phelps (1992) echoes my own uneasiness when she warns that "political visions projected without constraint in writing classrooms tend to self-righteousness and moral outrage" (p. 19).

Of course many social rhetoricians write sensitively and soberly about their strategies for directing students to their perspectives. Despite syllabi and texts that may look one-sided (see Ruszkiewicz, 1992), progressives argue that their courses don't actually compel students to believe anything. Rather, instructors work to establish conditions in which apprentice writers can discover that their "subject positions" have been largely scripted by an oppressive *status quo*, which students can then perhaps resist by writing scripts of their own. As Susan C. Jarratt (1992) puts it, "Instead of conversion, the 'politicized' teachers I know look for dialogic reflection in our students' writing and oral responses" (p. 37).

My problem is that the social critique within which such dialogue occurs often sounds like a soliloquy rattled off by a bored actor—practiced, predictable, and unreflective. Any devotee of social theory will, for example, recognize the script Kurt Spellmeyer (1991) composes for English teachers:

> The dilemma of college English has been complicated further by the discovery that knowledge itself, which formerly seemed so benign and accessible, is irreparably "contaminated," and in fact always was, by interests arising from class, race, gender, logocentrism, logophobia, reification, mystification, ideology, and power. (p. 71)

The word *discovery* makes the contaminants of knowledge here seem as calculable as the orbit of an asteroid, ironic in that this worldview purports to arise from nonfoundational epistemologies. Yet the very predictability of this core message makes talk of encouraging students to explore *difference* within liberatory rhetorics ring hollow to me. For in fact, the system seems defined and closed, fully determined by predictable, if complex, interests arising from class, race, gender, logocentrism, logophobia, reification, and so on. The progressive teacher already has the answers.

I want to believe Karen Fitts and Alan France (1994) when they attest that "[i]n the struggle to advance our own political agenda against our students' resistance, we have found a way to open a space, an occasion for cultivating public discourse" (p. 23), but I'm not sure where that space might be in a writing class where teachers also declare that "we consider our role to be that of *teaching resistance* to cultural definitions of biological sex by provoking dissonance between egalitarian expectations on one hand and social and cultural asymmetries of power and perceived worth, on the other" (original emphasis, p. 15). Fitts and France sound too sure of themselves.

I want to believe that Adam Katz (1995) is interested "in the particularity of different voices" within the framework of a "genuinely democratic polity" (p. 209), but my faith is shaken when I read what he proposes doing with his students' work:

> ...the type of writing that is based upon what I call the "consensus model," in which the purpose of writing is to conceal and reconcile contradictions and oppositions ("we all need to come together as a nation"), also needs to be expropriated from the students. Only in this way can the student's own positioning in relation to the dominant ideology be investigated for the student. (p. 215)

I don't associate expropriations and investigations with democratic practices, inside or outside the classroom. And I resist a pedagogy that regards people as tools of ideology unable to fashion a place in the world without the aid of startlingly reductive theory.

I do expect that theorists and practitioners of social rhetoric understand simple political difference, but have some cause for doubt. Nine years ago when I complained that an anthology selected for a required writing course at UT-Austin explored only leftist perspectives on race and gender questions, a junior member of the faculty asked (sincerely, I'm sure), "Has anyone written on the other side of these issues?" When I mentioned affirmative action policies specifically, an associate professor declared,"No one opposes affirmative action." Perhaps this narrowness of vision also explains how 40 English faculty in Austin could miss the irony in their buying a newspaper ad to chastise an undergraduate journalist for editorializing against their course in *difference* (Bernstein, 1994).

Yet the principle of controlling or silencing dissent has earned a place in social rhetoric and critical theory, echoing arguments made a generation ago by Herbert Marcuse (see Kors & Silvergate, 1998). The Preface to the first edition of the popular *Rereading America*, for example, asserts that "we have not tried to 'balance' pro and con arguments so that students are encouraged—ever so predictably—to see both sides and find truth always in the middle" (Colombo, Cullen, & Lisle, 1989, p. viii). By the third edition the book is even bolder: "It's more accurate to think of *Rereading America* as a handbook that helps students explore the ways that the dominant culture shapes their ideas, values, and beliefs.... Ultimately, *Rereading America* is about resistance" (1995, pp. viii–ix). Deanne Bogdan (1990) suggests ever-so-delicately that certain literary texts may have to be silenced to serve feminist political ends: "Sometimes it is important first to close down alternatives, to use negative capability as a way of calling things out of existence for a while to make a case for new growth" (p. 139). James R. Bennett (1989), writing in *College English*, declares that "we can affirm the freedom to dissent radically in the classroom by refusing equal time to ruling powers" (p. 816).

I suspect most practitioners of liberatory rhetoric do find place for dissent in their classrooms, but then I hear Patricia Bizzell (1992) authorizing teachers to exercise rhetorical authority in the name of social justice: "I would range over the values my students are exploring and try to find those that could be used persuasively to turn students to my egalitarian worldview" (p. 6). I watch Sharon Crowley (1991) moving a step farther, agreeing with Bizzell that perhaps white males ought not to have the same voice in writing classes as women and minorities:

> [B]ecause composition students are in some sense our captives, we must give up our liberal tolerance if we are to bring about social change through them. We must also admit that we enact our own hegemonic desire when we use the required composition course to teach our preferred politics. (pp. 196–197)

And I wonder what's going on here? Shouldn't a course in rhetoric and composition move students toward more political choice and freer expression? Why must Bizzell's egalitarian worldview be an issue in her writing class? And why must Crowley communicate her preferred politics to a captive audience, civilities of liberal tolerance suspended? Have all other streams for political expression in America—political parties, special interest lobbies, newspapers, journals, town meetings, demonstrations, radio call-ins, and chatrooms—suddenly dried up?

Why this fear of balanced points of views, alternative ways of seeing, or sharing time with traditional views? Do the proponents of social rhetoric—though interested and energized by politics—actually fear and distrust it, knowing that outcomes cannot always be predicted or controlled? Or perhaps they silently subscribe to P. J. O'Rourke's (1994) definition of politics as "the business of getting power and privilege without possessing merit" (p. 12). I should think that theorists of language who want classrooms to be sites of political struggle would be capable of operating in real political kitchens themselves, not just in academic safe havens.

Yet in theory, at least, it's conservatives who should be concerned, silenced as they have been in the academy. Why else would Dennis Lynch (1995) feel obliged to concede—in the final paragraph of an essay arguing that teachers of rhetoric ought to advocate certain social values and unteach others—that "one can hold any political beliefs one chooses and still teach or practice rhetoric" (p. 368)? Who but an academic would think otherwise? That the concession has to be made in a scholarly article suggests how far postmodern composition theory has drifted from classroom practice. And yet if one subscribes to a view of language that so privileges one's progressive commitments that theory and politics converge, one might indeed wonder whether conservatives can be literate at all.

Lynch (1995) makes his concession near the end of an article grounding politicized writing classes less in postmodernism than in classical rhetoric; he draws attention to a line in Isocrates's *Antidosis* describing the conditions of Greek judicial hearings: "we take our solemn oath at the beginning of each year that we will hear impartially both accusers and accused" (p. 358). From this precedent, Lynch argues that teaching fairness and a principle of equal hearing are appropriate in a rhetoric class because these are conditions that reinforce democracy—a reasonable assertion. But Lynch also infers from Isocrates that there is a concomitant right to be understood—a precondition to social justice: "I would argue that virtues such as an equal hearing and the right to be understood...are and should be a part of rhetoric courses and rhetoric curricula because they are values—or habits of mind" (pp. 358–359, 363). This concern for social justice leads him, via a reading of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's *The New Rhetoric* (1958/1969), to suggest that teachers act appropriately when they lead students to question the quality of their political autonomy. Lynch endorses, for example, the writing instructor who sees it as her political duty to make women in her class understand that "women aren't free agents in a sexist society" (p. 367). Teachers who ignore the social and political conditions under which rhetoric operates will, he warns, ultimately undermine the discipline itself.

What I find most striking about this sophisticated if somewhat tortuous argument is that it leads Lynch exactly where other social theorists have arrived—at a rendering of rhetorical situations that seems static and sheltered. In his drive to link the teaching of rhetoric and writing to postmodern critiques of power, hierarchy, and dominant ideologies, Lynch seems to forget that the rhetor, to a great extent, imagines and then shapes the circumstances of his reception. That is what rhetoric is for—achieving persuasion in situations where equal hearings cannot be guaranteed, where existing powers might wish to maintain the upper hand. And that is how we should teach rhetoric. Were there, indeed, an enforceable right to be understood, there would be little need for rhetoric.

When Antony in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* enjoins his fellow Romans to "lend me your ears," he knows he must manufacture a reason for them to listen: "I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him" (qtd. in Evans,1974). Like Aristotle, Augustine, Bacon and, for that matter, James McCrimmon, Shakespeare apparently appreciated that rhetoric is an instrument for creating conditions that Lynch, Bizzell, Crowley, and others might prefer to legislate: We will control the horizontal; we will control the vertical; we will give up liberal tolerance. To constrain the conditions under which discourse may proceed so tightly as to deduce a "right to be heard" from an inclination to listen is to imagine a fugitive and cloistered rhetoric unwilling to face the dust and heat of politics. It is, perhaps, to imagine the progressive teacher on his or her soapbox in the classroom?

I like it much better when Bizzell (1992) asserts—after claiming the right to turn students toward her worldview—that "after the fashion of Isocrates, I would encourage my students to imitate my exercise of rhetorical authority. They should be allowed to try to persuade me (a move I think academics seldom make with students whose views are radically different from their own) and other members of the class" (p. 6). This sounds exactly right, except that word *allowed.* It is the signal—and not a very subtle one—that the teacher holds all the power: she selects the topic to reflect her worldview; she confers permission to disagree; presumably, she gives out the grades. And so it must be when a teacher makes her class a forum for advancing political views, even in the name of virtue. Hence, the great irony of advocacy writing classrooms: they are not political at all, merely politicized—for what is at stake finally seems not to be important civic and social issues, but the instructor's ability to control them.

In a different context, C. H. Knoblauch (1990) warns that every sort of claim about literacy should be placed under scrutiny:

> ...what makes any ideology visible as such and, therefore, properly limited in its power to compel unconscious assent is critical scrutiny, the only safeguard people have if they are to be free of the designs of others. To the extent that

> literacy advocates of one stripe or another remain unconscious of or too comfortable with those designs, their offerings of skills constitute a form of colonizing, a benign but no less mischievous paternalism that rationalizes the control of others by representing it as a means of liberation. (p. 80)

I fear that the highly sophisticated arguments social rhetoricians sometimes make in defense of writing courses shaped from their personal political beliefs come very close to being rationalizations of control represented as liberation. I only hope such theorists and practitioners are both conscious of and occasionally uneasy with their designs.

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chapter 3

Advocating Language: An Ethical Approach to Politics in the Classroom

William H. Thelin
University of Cincinnati

As teachers of writing, still trying to grant legitimacy to composition as a discipline, we have to negotiate our political differences in ways conducive to our emergence as a field. What I mean here is that we need more precision in our public discourse so that it is clear what the issues are and how our various backgrounds—whether they be in linguistics, rhetoric, education, literature, or composition—give us the expertise to make the decisions that nonacademics in our government would like to make for us. I would like to suggest that we start this negotiation by listening to each other and becoming more introspective regarding our agendas, the ethical consideration of opposing perspectives, and the effect our pedagogies have on our students.

A distinction must be made, though, between negotiation and compromise. Compromising to reach some accord or consensus would work against the marginalized or disenfranchised voices in our community. Compromise is, after all, a function of the dominant power system to incorporate and then reinterpret as many dissenting positions as possible, so that the dominant system can maintain its hold on power. In a compromise in any field, the defining difference of the dissenting positions is often swept away under an umbrella of acceptance. The key underlying structures, whether they be modernism, capitalism, ethnocentrism, elitism, and so on, remain untouched and continue to operate unchanged by the inclusion of the dissenting position (see Zavarzadeh and Morton's 1991 discussion of the curriculum changes at Syracuse as an example, although they disagree with the official report that what occurred there was actually a compromise). Since current-traditionalism is still the most widely practiced pedagogy of writing instruction (Crowley, 1990, p. 139, estimates that at least half of the writing programs in this country subscribe to it), a general compromise in our field would keep the structure of current-traditionalism intact, while diluting through reinterpretation the impact of process and post-process innovations. Most textbooks engage in this form of compromise. They give what amounts to lip service to writing as process and discovery, making distinctions between prewriting and drafting, for instance, but talking about them like they were stages in a formula to follow. These texts will then move to what is important to them: a discussion of the modes; topic sentences; the paragraph as a single, unified idea; clarity and correctness in presentation; and so on. Starting with incompatible rhetorical foundations, the two positions obviously clash and the empowered system—current-traditionalism—consumes its opposition by borrowing jargon and relabeling old practices. Compromise, then, works to keep practitionere from becoming alert, as Knoblauch and Brannon (1984) state, to "how teaching differs depending on the perspective assumed" (p. 5).

A compromise on political differences might produce similar results for the practitioners on the margins. Studying how race, class, and gender have been mediated through works of popular culture could be reinterpreted as debating limited issues on or about these subjects. Understanding the individual as a social construction of time, culture, and language could be reconstituted as acknowledging the effects of the socializing process on the individual. The dangers to the foundations of the dissenting positions are numerous, as these two examples briefly illuminate.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is twofold. I want to try to clarify the disputes over politicized pedagogies by giving the discussion a grounding in rhetorical theories. This should determine whether what is happening in some classes is ethical. I then want to propose a teaching method where politics can be fit comfortably into the writing classroom and help in the development of student writers. To this end, I use research and concrete examples to address the concerns of those worried about politicized writing courses stunting the growth of writers. Although many instructors have voiced outrage over various political pedagogies, I will concentrate on the critiques espoused by Maxine Hairston, as even though I am in sharp disagreement with much of what she says, I think over the course of several articles, she has expressed what many feel.

The starting place for this negotiation is to determine what it is advocates on the left want to change and what it is advocates on the right want to save. I should say that I am bothered by this use of the common binary division, left and right, as it keeps a structure in place that ought to be questioned. Moreover, left and right (and their associations, liberal/conservative, democrat/republican) do not describe accurately the positions of people in composition studies. Take, for example, the way Hairston (1992) tries to divide the issues along political lines. She makes the distinction between liberalism, associating herself with it by implication, and the cultural left, who are radicals and authoritarians. She does not use, then, the term "conservative" to describe herself, but in composition circles, she is certainly seen as one of the people most interested in conserving the findings of composition researchers from the 1970s and in limiting their extension. Yet, Hairston's "new possibilities for freshman courses" are unabashedly multicultural, using students' experiences as a forum for discussing cultural differences in power relations, gender roles, myths, religion, rituals, and tension. Many would associate such a course with the cultural left, as it is clear that issues of gender, race, and class are significant elements in her classroom, just as they are in the politicized courses she criticizes. Therefore, referring to Hairston as a theorist on the right inaccurately associates her with an agenda she might denounce. At the same time, labeling her a theorist on the left, or trying to say that the whole debate is taking place between liberals and radical leftists, strikes me as wrong, for reasons I will discuss shortly. For now, then, I will reluctantly use the terms "left" and "right" for the reason that proponents of politicized and depoliticized classes have excluded essential information from their public proclamations, which without, makes it impossible to disinter their actual political concerns and affiliations.

A clear objection from Hairston (1992) that many on the right have embraced is that students should not be reading on political issues in a composition course, since "the focus should be on writing" (p. 190). The reasoning in her argument, though, would preclude any type of reading, since even texts not on race, class, and gender—the targets of her argument—would divert the focus away from writing. Hairston's (1985) advice that composition studies should keep itself separate from literary theory suggests, perhaps, that reading is not her real concern. With its connection to literature and literary studies, she might fear reading as a tool that would allow literature professors to again assert their agenda into writing courses. The struggle over politicized and depoliticized courses, then, could just be a power struggle in the halls of English departments more than worry over pedagogical practices.

Ron Strickland (1993), however, analyzes Hairston's complaints differently, seeing her own political agenda as the hidden component of her attacks on any sort of politicization. According to Strickland, "the critique of individualism and of the ways that the human sciences have been complicit in the maintenance of the ideology of individualism" are the politicizing agents that are the "real issue" behind Hairston's attacks on leftist theorists (p. 251). John Trimbur (1990), analyzing her along different lines, feels that "what is really annoying" Hairston is that the "intellectual content of composition has changed" and that the "ideas and insights contained in contemporary critical theory, whether feminist, poststructuralist, neopragmatist, or neomarxist" are now influencing composition practioners. The mainstream that Hairston feels supports her is no longer there as composition studies has grown and has new "intellectual affiliation" (p. 700).

The counter-position of the left does not add any clarity to the debate, as it often does not correspond to any of the above possible interpretations of the rightist agenda. In fact, the left in this debate frequently obfuscates or avoids key parts of the issue. For instance, C. Mark Hurlbert and Michael Blitz, as contributors to their own collection of essays, *Composition and Resistance* (1991), discuss what exactly is in need of change in composition studies, but one of their stated goals is to "resist ending events and settling differences" (p. 1). Although thoughtful and highly introspective, their challenges to the field do not narrow the focus of the political conflict. In resisting closure and reconciliation, they actually overlook the arguments of the right, perhaps as not worthy to consider. One of those arguments, again from Hairston (1991), is especially poignant and might have affected their thinking if it had been dealt with. She argues that composition instructors, especially TAs, do not have the training or background knowledge to teach politically charged social issues. Her argument here correctly isolates a difficulty that any innovation in composition faces—that most writing instruction in the United States is conducted by TAs and adjuncts, who often have little background in composition, much less theory, sociology, economics, or political science. If Hairston's tone is a trifle condescending due to its sweeping generalizations, other scholars in the field have given sympathetic reads to the situation of employment in composition and the limitations it imposes, most notably Gillespie (1988) and Slevin (1991). But Hurlbert and Blitz do not stop to ponder these limitations. Instead, they give a call to teachers to become "counter-educators," a term that is never really defined but that might seem confusing to some and dangerous by its implication to others who are in nontenure-track positions and lack job security. Ultimately, then, Hurlbert and Blitz are talking about a revolution in teaching and studenting that ignores the very conditions that make that revolution impossible, conditions that Hairston is at least aware of.

Another assumption that their argument is predicated on is that writing instructors should be teaching toward political, social, and economic change. This again ignores the position of those on the right. More importantly, not often in the entire text are the forces that educators should resist forwarded for scrutiny. In other words, what should be resisted, how, and why? To their credit, Hurlbert and Blitz (1991) ask this same question, but their lack of an answer does not help the debate over the politicization of composition classrooms, especially in regard to the ethics of advocating a specific political position. They do point out that composition educators divide on whether we should teach students to read and write within the curricula or to assist them in resisting such constraints, and they do see that both views leave students "in the powerless position of having to resist abstractions rather than people and their actions and their policies" (p. 45). In constructing this division, though, they miss the specifics of the political disputes. They might, perhaps, be moving toward loftier goals, but they do not answer what is being done to students that is so abhorrent. Why should teachers want students to resist the curriculum? How is it complicit in political, economic, and social oppression? The case, then, against education in general and composition in particular is incomplete, as no evidence is presented to show that writing classrooms are doing something that must be changed in order to help cure the ills of society. Their concern is an abstraction as vague as the one they feel students must resist.

With so much remaining unresolved in terms of what should be the underlying argument (what needs to be changed versus why the change is regressive or dangerous), it could be that undisclosed personal conflicts and desires are influencing the discussion of politicized classes as much as pedagogical issues. Again, it is really hard to determine the intentions and goals of those in disagreement. Is using Marxist or feminist material in class the heart of the issue? Are we talking about emancipatory practices such as having students determine course content? Is it wanting students to discover the "political realities" and the inherent contradictions of Western civilization? Is someone out there really worried about student indoctrination? The questions are numerous. I have become terribly confused, then, when I have tried to figure out why many scholars have failed to discuss the issue in clearer terms, and maybe even more importantly, why the targets are not mentioned specifically in so many of the articles I have read.

Donald Lazere (1992), for example, opposes the imposition of ideology on students, claiming that concerns from critics are warranted because of the tendency of some "leftist teachers and theorists" to assume that everyone agrees with them rather than to design pedagogical approaches that take "respectful account of opposing views" (p. 195). These teachers are not named in the article nor does it appear his observation is the result of any research or data collection. To confuse the matter terribly, Lazere acknowledges that it is inevitable that his own partisanship as a democratic socialist biases his presentation of material to his students. He feels it is his responsibility to expose students to socialist viewpoints because of their exclusion in other arenas of discourse. So where's the boundary, then, between imposition and responsibility to expose, albeit with a bias? What are other leftists instructors doing that is so different as to be deserving of criticism? Why is Lazere assuming that other teachers with leftist persuasions have not constructed a theoretical or rhetorical schema for teaching writing?

Like many I am sure, I have taken offense at some of the caricatures of "leftist" pedagogues, especially when the pejorative label "politically correct" is attached. The sweeping denouncements of anything political have been so vague that any instructor promoting a teaching method challenging dominant structures would have to see herself in the portrayal. Therefore, I must be included among those being attacked because I openly admit to politicizing my classroom. I do not particularly advocate any agenda except political awareness, but I recognize that the decisions I make throughout the teaching of a writing course tilt my classes to the left. I see little choice when confronted with decisions such as what students should write about, how the class sessions should operate, how I should handle the power that I have been granted by the institution, and so on. For me to depoliticize my writing courses, I would have to be shown what a depoliticized classroom looks like. I have yet to see a course that avoids making the decisions that contribute to politicization. I have seen many teachers who do not admit to politicization or who do not recognize the numerous political decisions they have made, but I have never seen a class that is not political.

I am equally certain conservative compositionists have become quite incensed at being called racists, homophobes, red baiters, and sexists for questioning some of the more radical classroom practices as espoused in the field's journals. Outside of pedagogy and theory and into the mainstream political landscape, many of those instructors would consider themselves liberal or even leftist, and being associated with abhorrent practices such as racism and sexism must touch a nerve. I think their dedication to their students and what they are trying to accomplish gets dismissed far too often. There are some good teachers trying to stifle blatant political advocacy in classrooms in order to hold onto issues of fairness, only to be accused of subscribing to antiquated notions of positivism.

I feel we need grounding in this issue, not negation and puerile name-calling. We have to stop seeing (or creating) enemies and villains and give the issue of politicization a substance that can be reviewed and critiqued. I suspect much of the momentum for change comes from individual need to fight oppression and to take what has not been freely given. I also believe that much of the resistance to various forms of change comes from personal fear of losing power or perhaps of being unable to adapt and teach under the new pedagogies. Obviously, however, the issue cannot be grounded in this abstract of a manner, so in a very real way, my argument might miss the very ideological and psychological issues that keep this debate so polemic.

However absent this clear understanding of deeper, more personal concerns of the bickering compositionists, I feel we should begin with a definition of the political. Many, I think, equate politics with instructors expressing opinions on issues of race, class, gender, the environment, war, sexual preference, the government, and so on. More specifically, these opinions are considered political when they deviate from the mores of conservative beliefs. This understanding of politics limits the scope of the discussion and has created much of the confusion in public discussions. Therefore, I propose a definition that I think encompasses the many uses of "politics," drawing on Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren's understanding of the ideological terrain of education. Giroux and McLaren (1991) write that

> the sociology of knowledge, the history of consciousness, the critical study of colonial discourse, cultural Marxism, continental social theory, and feminist theory have provoked a conceptual recasting of schools as more than simply instructional sites. They may instead be considered as cultural arenas where heterogeneous ideological, discursive, and social forms collide in an unremitting struggle for dominance. (p. 153)

Politics, then, is the negotiation within this cultural fray of what constitutes knowledge and power. The making of knowledge must, by implication, be political. With this understanding of politics and the political, it should make no sense to speak of politicized and depoliticized classrooms. They all must be political because they are involved with the making of knowledge. Even a professor who tries her best to be objective in presentation is engaging in a political act, as by attempting objectivity, she has not stepped outside of the fray. Rather, she has carefully constructed limits for herself (and her students) and her "objectivity" acts as a filter for dominant ideology to maintain its prevalence in the classroom.

POLITICS AND RHETORIC

If with the above understanding, we can move beyond the call for depoliticized classrooms,[1] the issue has to move toward the ethical and pedagogically sound implementation of political agendas into the classroom. Here, Jim Berlin's analysis of competing rhetorics is useful toward grounding the political into understandable issues of competent pedagogy. Berlin, in his monograph *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900–1985* (1987), connects every rhetorical system with assumptions about the nature of reality (p. 4). He believes that "in teaching writing we are providing students with guidance in seeing and structuring their experience with a set of tacit rules about distinguishing truth from falsity, reality from illusion" (p. 7). Berlin divides the theories of rhetoric in the 20th century into three categories on the basis of epistemology: objective, subjective, and transactional. With these categories, we can safely position the political pedagogies advocated by the left and the right into views of reality and judge whether they are conducive to student growth when transformed into pedagogy.

The objective theories rely on the belief that the real is located in the material world. Reality is determined by collecting "sense data" and coming to conclusions that do not take into consideration the social, psychological, and historical preconceptions that might influence or guide the mind interpreting the external world. Both writer and audience must be objective in presentation and reception of the data as it is recorded in language because truth exists prior to both perception and language. Disagreement among writers and audiences is a matter of unclear language or imprecise observation (Berlin, 1987).

The subjective theories locate reality in the perceptions of the individual or "within a realm that is accessible only through the individual's internal apprehension, apart from the empirically verifiable sensory world" (Berlin, 1987, p. 11). Truth is so private and individual that communicating it becomes very difficult. Teachers cannot teach any tenets of writing because writing is too strongly connected with the discovery of truth. Writers, then, are encouraged to express their impression of reality and to not mimic the vision of others. The focus of language usage is to capture the individual visions; students must find unique metaphors to express their originality. Audience concerns diminish as the writer's primary duty is to be authentic and to not waver from her personal understanding of the truth (Berlin, 1987).

The transactional theories understand reality to be the result of the interaction between subject, object, audience, and language. Reality is thus not located solely through sensory perception, quantification, or idealization outside the external realm (Berlin, 1987). Transactional theories differ in significant ways, but they give composition three of its major schools: the classical, the cognitive, and the epistemic. The classical relies heavily on logic and rationality, while the cognitive distinguishes itself by its view of the mind as a "set of structures that develop in a chronological sequence" that corresponds to the structures of reality, audience, and language (p. 159). Not to ignore the cognitive or classical school of thought, but the epistemic is the one important to my ultimate argument here because it blends the material, the social, and the personal with a belief in language as the continual mediator. In epistemic theory, experience and language cannot be separated, and subject, object, and audience are seen as verbal constructs. Rhetoric, then, is implicated in all human behavior and truths "arise out of dialectic, out of the interaction of individuals within discourse communities" (pp. 16–17).

Part of Hairston's objection to politicized pedagogies, as alluded to earlier, is that literature teachers have suddenly become interested in writing courses after years of neglecting them. She feels that these teachers do not have the proper background to teach writing. By background, I am assuming Hairston means a familiarity with the research into the processes of student writers and an understanding of the debilitating effects of current-traditional practices, which spring from an objective theory of rhetoric. If her fears are, indeed, about a mixture of current-traditionalism and politics by literature professors, then her concerns are not groundless. Clearly, an instructor with an agenda to promote a certain political or social agenda operating under a current-traditional theory of rhetoric would violate many tenets of contemporary composition theory. No matter how sound the politics, if feminism, Marxism, or environmentalism, and so on, is considered the truth—the objective reality revealed—the student would have no choice but to regurgitate that dogma in the clearest terms possible and to shift concentration onto matters of structure and correctness. What is overlooked in Hairston's analysis of "politicized" classrooms, however, is that literature teachers, if versed in contemporary theory, are remarkably attuned to epistemic understandings of reality. Of the instructors she uses as examples of, I assume, bad pedagogues, not one is teaching under an objective theory of writing. Hairston's various quotations from both literature and composition professors include statements from Ron Strickland, Lester Faigley, Dale Bauer, David Bleich, Jim Berlin, John Trimbur, and by inference, her former colleagues at Texas at Austin (Linda Brodkey, John Slatin, and others). None of them are associated with current-traditional or any other objective theory of rhetoric.

What we do have in many of these pedagogies is an epistemic understanding of reality. A review of the works of the theorists named above can attest to that, even though the term "epistemic" may not be used by many of them. Hairston's approach, in contrast, places her squarely in the subjective rhetoric category. This is revealed when she claims "politicized" writing courses instruct the students toward the truths of the teacher, not toward the possibility of the students discovering their own (1991, p. B2). She feels that students "will not think critically or write honestly" when the risk of opposing the teacher's views are present (p. B1). Truth is clearly not something that is arrived at through object, subject, audience, and language, but rather is of the personal variety. "Each of us," Hairston states, "sees the world through our own particular lens, one shaped by unique experience" (1992, p. 190). It is their "own" truth that the students must find. The critical thinking she is looking for is never defined; it has become such a buzz word in composition that it has ceased to mean anything concrete no matter who is using it. Writing honestly, though, again recognizes that the students' primary duty is to be authentic to their own vision. Personal beliefs have to be asserted in order to write honestly, no matter what other evidence might suggest. And certainly in Hairston's class, where writing about other people's ideas is considered taboo, the rhetoric that emerges has to be a glorification of the individual. Any social process in this course—whether in peer group critique or collaboration—is limited by the range of opinions of the freshman writers and by what effect they should have on the individual writer. The goal, as Hairston proclaims, is not to complicate the individual student's personal understanding, but for that student to "communicate with others" and "to understand the other" through collaboration with other students (p. 190). The teacher's truths are apparently not to be considered.[2]

So I think much of this debate can be grounded as a dispute between the subjective and the epistemic conceptions of rhetoric and reality. It has been too easy for both sides to think of the other as the dogmatic, repressive elitists. By looking at the argument as competition among the rhetorics, the effect on students can be more accurately theorized and studied. What is ethical and unethical can also be considered outside of simple allegiance to political causes.

I feel subjective theories of rhetoric lend themselves to more abuse than transactional rhetorics do. Instructors ask students to present their version of reality, but beyond that, the student must sound authentic. Their voice must be unique. It is the "particular lens" Hairston speaks of which makes this rhetoric dangerous for students. Revealing personal traumas or confessing to being a victimizer can be seen as ways toward a good grade. Under this rhetoric, what is a teacher to do when a student writes a paper blaming herself for being raped? Do we question her personal vision of the situation? Simply sympathize and console? Ask for more detail so we can see the event as the unique experience it must have been? It becomes more complicated when the writer espouses blatant racism or homophobia in a paper. We can question why a student feels this way, but at what point do we have the right to claim that her vision of reality is blurred? Where does our societal responsibility kick in as teachers?

Richard Miller's "Fault Lines in the Contact Zone" (1994) speaks to this difficulty. After responding to a particularly problematic paper involving gay-bashing, an English instructor used the paper as a corpus for discussion at conferences. The question directed at the audience was how to respond to the student and paper. Miller identifies categories of responses from the audience, the extreme of which is direct action to remove the student from the class, the more moderate to remove the paper from the private corridor of response to the public for inspection alongside legal definitions of hate speech. For a student confronted with such options, the rules have changed because the teacher has acted along the lines of being socially responsible. Personal vision is no longer accurate. All of sudden, the student will be forced to see both sides of the situation with an obvious nudge toward changing his opinions. And at this point, a student could feel betrayed and confused.

These teaching moments become more devious and unethical when the instructor first hides her political agenda after encouraging an expression of subjective truth, then reveals it during group workshop or as marginal notes on a draft. On issues of rape or racism, the student might expect such feedback and be able to sigh and absorb it. Dominant culture has at least paid lip service to rape as violence against women and to antiracism. But on issues of ethnocentricity, homosexuality, feminism, capitalist exploitation, and biodiversity, the student might scratch her head over such comments and feel genuinely unable to write further. Moreover, a successful revision obviously would have to be a compromise of her position. She could not both be true to her unique vision and take the instructor's opinions into serious consideration.

With epistemic conceptions of reality, real audience considerations can be taken into account, including those of the instructor. It is no longer an issue of ethics to have students consider opposing viewpoints; the dialectic is the only way toward knowledge. Essays on rape and racism would not be seen as expressions of unique experience. The instructor and other students are participants in reality just as much as the writer. The situations would have to be contextualized and historicized and the language the student used would be a factor in understanding reality. So when Hairston (1992) claims that under the logic of the cultural left, a teacher would feel free to promote any ideology, including fascism, racial superiority, and religious fundamentalism, she is ignoring the profoundly different views of reality between a transactional rhetorician, especially an epistemic, and fascists, racists, and fundamentalists. Since the latter understandings have nothing to do with knowledge as a dialectical interchange, such agendas would be incompatible with transactional rhetorics. However, some leftist political agendas, such as multiculturalism, feminism, and environmentalism, are highly compatible with the epistemic theory of transaction, as they seek to give voice to the previously voiceless, thus including more of the material and the social into the dialectic. Depending on what particular factions of these political agendas are being promoted, the understanding of the individual as a "creation of a particular historical and cultural moment," as Berlin (1988, p. 489) once worded it, is in keeping with them also.

One possible danger here is if the instructor sees herself outside ideology, which manifests itself again with hidden agendas—with comments on papers or in conference that don't seem to jibe with the complexity of the dialectic. To remain ethical, the teacher needs to create a situation where the students see that political issues are as complicated for the instructor as they are for the student. The instructor's leanings should be open to scrutiny rather than to be masked under a pretense of objectivity. The instructor's agenda can be overt without fear of intimidating students because reality will change with the participation of the audience, so the certainty of convictions that an instructor takes with her into a class will be subject to doubt as much as the students'.

Another possible abuse here, and an obvious one at that, is that the instructor will be rigid and not be a genuine part of the dialectic. The epistemic theory of reality can be manipulated by instructors—perhaps with good intentions—who expect students to grasp and agree with all of it too quickly. Students must still be allowed to go through the learning process and to stumble as they negotiate reality. If the instructor has already decided that the mission and ideology of the university are corrupt and focuses her class around changing them, the students will be denied understanding this reality and the instructor will not have a chance to revise her opinions.

Both these possibilities could be at the core of the arguments set forth by Hairston and others. The question that must be asked, though, is what proof is there that epistemic classes are indeed silencing students and stifling creativity. For all of Hairston's complaints, she has presented no research to support her contentions. There have been no student interviews, no testing, no observations, not even the type of anecdotal evidence that Dinesh D'Souza and Roger Kimball have made a living from. However, those on the left have offered little as well to support their contention that what they are doing is ethical. For example, in Berlin's (1991) discussion of an experiment at Purdue where the freshman writing course was organized around the activity of cultural critique, only small tidbits of concrete proof of the program's success are given. Berlin tells us that student evaluations fell "within the normal acceptable range for the freshman writing course" and he mentions that the teachers were satisfied (p. 54), but not one student voice is heard among the many who must have participated. Berlin tries to respond to the accusations of indoctrination with a reminder of his goals, a statement that the students did not have to assume a leftist critique, and the observation that most of them did not follow a leftist agenda in their writing. He also writes that student resistance was tremendous. But he generalizes, not giving the specifics of whatever data were collected. The effects on the students' development as writers are left unexplored; in fact, they are not even considered. Some of the women apparently critiqued culturally sanctioned gender codes, but not one line of what they wrote appears. Certainly nothing of the resistance Berlin speaks of goes into his discussion. His purpose, perhaps, was not to answer critics completely; however, he spends time defending his project so he had a resistant audience in mind. Unfortunately, he did not analyze the concerns of critics such as Hairston.

It is difficult to tell, then, whether some lines are being crossed in the various manifestations of epistemic pedagogy and whether conservative complaints are imagined or legitimate. The published material is just too vague and rarely based on formal research. Furthermore, student voices have been left out entirely. For the debate over "politicized" pedagogies to have substance, instructors must present their theories, show how they manifest themselves in the classroom, and then present evidence in support of them. Student voices should be prominent. How else can the stigma of politicization be explored?

SCENES FROM CLASSROOMS

To begin a grounded discussion about politics in writing courses, I want to talk about my pedagogical practices and recreate real classroom discussions, as well as give excerpts from student essays and interviews. While I know my pedagogy, just as any other, is not easily transferrable to other classrooms in other regions during different historical circumstances, my intention is to present these scenes from my courses to be judged as ethical or unethical, not to claim they can be reproduced by other instructors. One of my hopes is that the underlying concepts of what I do can be adapted as instructors forge transactional pedagogies of their own, but my overall purpose is to give as precise a description of my particular epistemic approach as possible to start a dialogue in our community that is grounded in specifics, not abstractions. I feel my pedagogy maintains a high ethical standard while injecting political rigor into the college classroom, but others might not.

My approach is based in social-epistemic rhetoric and focuses on language as the mediator of subject, object, and audience. It is based on assumptions that I discuss with my students: 1) that the discipline of composition is a study of written language use; 2) that content is more important than form in producing intelligent, interesting papers; and 3) that texts, any texts, even freshman essays, participate in and express the views of the dominant cultural system.

My courses usually run as ongoing writing workshops, where students share their essays with either small groups or with the whole class. The first week of the class is spent acquainting them with the conflicts in our field and introducing them to the concepts of drafting and revision. I stress the importance of language use and use mock essays to demonstrate how sentences can be interrogated to show how certain positions on issues have been naturalized into our vocabulary and into our notion of logic through cliched conclusions, vague generalizations, rhetorical ploys, and metaphors.

I make my position as a critic of contemporary American culture very clear. I assure them, though, that my opinions about capitalism, feminism, and ethnocentricity will not be criteria in their grading, nor will they be expected to write on these topics per se. In fact, when I use professional texts to stimulate thinking, which I do to varying degrees nearly every semester, I never select ones that I completely agree with. For instance, I used Ritzer's *The McDonaldization of Society* (1993) to further complicate the dialectic in my students' writing even though I believe Ritzer's analysis ignores the impact of issues of class, race, and gender. I like students to see me wrestle through ideas and to see my thinking alter as we investigate issues. It is also essential for them to see and consider professional voices expressing a view of reality that differs from my own.

Despite the fact that I do not use texts as a reflection of my own ideas, I do not try to hide my agenda. I concentrate on the students' own language use, and I tell them that I think they will find that the ideologies of racism, sexism, and elitism (to name a few here) have been mediated through concepts familiar to them, concepts that are rarely questioned. I want my students to do that questioning, so I instruct them to look for incongruities in their writing—details that seem at odds with their generalization or with what they are feeling, different perspectives on the issue that seem to turn their lessons in life topsy-turvy, the words they can't find to explain themselves or the ones they have been told not to use, even a preponderance of passive voice constructions. Looking for these incongruities, I tell them, will bring the assumptions inherent in language to the forefront of their writing, and at times, will challenge their stated beliefs.

It is at this time that they must become aware of different notions of reality and the structure under which knowledge is created. It would be a mistake on my part, though, if I tried to push them farther than that. I will tell them what I think—and many students do ask—but since I am always reanalyzing and reflecting, especially as a participant in my own courses, I am rarely settled with answers. Therefore, even if the students suspect my goal is to get them to think like I do, they see how complex any type of mimicry would be. I also take these moments back to language, back to the texts. As a pedagogical practice, I usually write along with my students, so I can even steer them toward my own writing so they can investigate what I have said for the very incongruities we talk about in their writing.

A typical class period starts with me pointing out positive parts in a student's essay,[4] and then focusing on a cliché, such as "honesty is the best policy," or a use of language that seems to be vague or unexplored, adjectives such as "nice" or "interesting" or abstract political concepts like "democracy" or "pro-life." The traditional way of "correcting" poor word choices is just to tell the student to be more concrete in her revision of the paper, but this epistemic approach questions why the student chose the words or phrases and then moves beyond authorial intention toward connotations of the words and examines why certain synonyms—or more correctly, *seeming* synonyms—cannot be substituted without changing meaning. These changing meanings take the discussion toward the audience, whether it be whole group or small group, and they give their perspectives and interpretations of these decisions made by the writer. Often I ask the students for their reactions to the paper, and if everything goes right, what usually emerges through the dialectic is a demonstration that a very complex ideology has been mediated—even intentionally obfuscated at times—by a particular use of rhetoric in relation to the larger purpose of the paper. The best question I ask to instigate this type of discussion is, "What do you mean here?" From whatever answers occur, I can keep shifting from personal meaning to larger, even dictionary, definitions to audience understandings. Although I do far too much talking at first, the students in the class catch on and start volunteering their interpretations, a process I will show shortly.

I want to stress that a paper does not have to address politically charged social issues for those issues to be discussed in class. Although some students choose to write about their observations concerning heated issues like abortion or Central America, topics such as friendship, love, football, or their jobs are often founded on assumptions embedded in the language that can lead a class toward discussions of sexist, racist, and capitalist ideology. I only ask the students to include a personal experience or observation, to analyze that experience or observation, and to come to some conclusion that goes beyond them and their immediate circumstances.[5] Often, I ask them to show how their experiences reflect or deviate from dominant culture or societal expectations. The question itself, then, lends to analysis of key terms and brings to the forefront issues of individuality and the influence of society on how we behave and think.

I'd like to recreate several moments in my teaching to give examples of what happens when students hit snags or are confronted with complexities in their language that put them in, perhaps, uncomfortable positions. Although I want to acknowledge here that some students might infer a "correct" politcal stance from my comments and the focus of the class, I feel it would be unethical and ultimately insulting to students to treat them as if they were incapable of handling a charged political discussion where I also have something important at stake. Far from backing down, most students use these moments as ways to develop their thinking and their writing skills. The majority do not see these times as an imposition of my politics on them, but rather as a discovery of the political in their own rhetoric. Few students have told me that their creativity was stifled or that they didn't learn anything. Some students have complained about the focus on the political, and many have been angry that I have complicated what they feel should remain simple. But it is not often I am accused of being unfair and very rare when a student claims that success in my classroom is linked to political conversion or a copying of my ideas. In fact, success from a teaching standpoint requires that I do not look for a polished finished draft as my sole criterion for grading, much less a polished understanding of political viewpoints. If I did look for tightly structured and narrowly focused essays, I would be disappointed, as what the students are negotiating in their writing will lead them off on tangents and contradictory statements in a continual process of revision. Certainty of positions or reliance on the truth of their own observations will not be the end result. What is familiar will become odd, and they have to write through it. One semester or one quarter of writing will not allow them to tighten up loose ends unless they shut down the process of discovery. Ultimately, then, I think all the components of this type of epistemic classroom work off each other in such a way so as to ensure the maintenance of ethics. The following examples, however, will allow the readers to decide for themselves about the ethics of the type of heated classroom exchanges that this method produces.

In one of my classes, a young woman named Heather wrote a paper on her relationship with her friends. She shared the paper in a whole class workshop. Because of problems in her immediate family, she was estranged from them and came to rely more and more on this collection of outcasts for solace and comfort. Her essay focused on the question of what exactly is a family. Her belief was that family was not limited by heritage, and she considered her friends to be her "second family," one that she valued even more than her "inherited relatives." I focused my comments almost exclusively on the use of the word *family*, and other terms such as "brotherhood," "the real me," and "being there" for someone.

The question of brotherhood could have quickly gone by the wayside, especially since in retrospect, I wish I had worded my question differently to reflect more the ultimate direction I had in mind for the discussion. I asked her, "Do you mean that you had no women friends in this second family?" She answered no, and wondered why I thought that. I referred her to the use of brotherhood. Heather and a few others said, "Oh, I see," as if I was simply looking for precision in language and to avoid sexist phrases. I didn't want to stop when Heather said it was a brotherhood and a sisterhood and said she would fix it. I wanted to know why she chose that wording. A male student said that brotherhood was a common word that meant friendship beyond the "man–woman thing." Heather wasn't as sure as she reexamined the draft. Her paper was about definition and suddenly "sisterhood" was striking her as all wrong. "My sister and I don't get along so well," she said offhandedly, still looking at her paper. Her last paper in the semester would deal with her evolving relationship with that sister, so the seeds for a future paper had been sewn.

"Why use familial terms to define your relationship with your friends?" I asked when 30 seconds of silence had passed by, my usual time to end silence. "Why am I hearing 'family' used here when it seems that your experience with a family unit has been so bad?"

She and others were perplexed. "Everyone needs a family," Heather said. "I'm just trying to show that it doesn't have to be blood relatives." Another student confirmed, saying she knew what Heather meant.

"So when Heather says that this group of friends is just like family, she's saying that they argue all the time, that they're abusive to each other, and that there's little support?"

A chorus of "no's" followed this statement. I pointed to parts in the paper where Heather said that her parents had kicked her out, that she had needed her friends to give her food, that in her darkest hours it was her friends who comforted her. I didn't want to pry into Heather's private life too much, even though I knew some sort of comparison would show what I meant. I tried another approach that I often do: I made myself vulnerable.

"People have complicated relationships with their families," I said. "My own relationship is strained most of the time. The one recurring memory I have from my teenage years is the constant screaming that took place in my household. The verbal abuse I took from my mother, her need to control my brothers and me to the point that we all rebelled in very unproductive ways, all sorts of things. When I look to describe positive relationships I have developed through friendship and reciprocation, like Heather is talking about here, I don't taint them by calling them family."

Some heads nodded. "Your family sounds like mine," Heather said. "So you're saying I shouldn't call my friends a second family?" This is a typical question and it is tricky to answer. The student wants closure and is willing to give up responsibility for language in order to get it. My goal is always to keep the issue open.

"No, I'm saying you should explore why you chose the word *family* to describe something good in your life when your own experiences with family and a lot of other people's experiences with families are extremely frustrating."

A student named Leslie broke in here, like she did every time I questioned traditional values. "A family is a good thing. There's nothing wrong with family just because a few families are messed up. Maybe if Heather wasn't drinking and paid them more respect, her family would work." Heather had referred in her paper to drinking to the point where she had to stagger home with the help of her friends.

"But you're talking about an ideal," another student named Herb said. "Most people got problems with their families."

"So why have we set it up as an ideal?" I asked.

"Because it is," Leslie contended. "People destroy what's good in their lives then blame their families."

"But can't we envision a different type of relationship, find another word, to symbolize the type of companionship we find, both in and out of our blood relationships?"

"If it's not broke, don't fix it," Leslie said, repeating a phrase that she fell back on several times during the course of the semester.

"The mafia calls themselves a 'family,'" Jeff, another student slightly older than the others, commented. A few people laughed, but I liked the comment.

"So why have we internalized for ourselves—Heather's not the only one who does this—the notion of family as the ideal, or the model, for a relationship?"

Herb couldn't find the exact words, but he held the class' attention for a minute or two with an explanation of unconditional love, ending with the statement that real love has conditions. "You can't expect people to like you no matter what you do. You got to earn your friends and keep on doing it."

Herb had struck a nerve and several students defended the love between a mother and a child (not a father and his child, it should be noted) as the most pure type of love, one that we should all aspire to. One woman named

Christine balked at this. "If your boyfriend cheats on you, do you have to keep on loving him no matter what? His behavior does determine how I'm going to treat him after that."

I hadn't said anything for a while except for preventing students from interrupting each other. But I felt it was my time. "So when we speak of 'family values,' are we talking about codes of conduct with others that aren't based on earned love? Is that what [President] Bush and [Vice President] Quayle were talking about?"

Some eyes rolled as I had brought the discussion back to the blatantly political. However, others saw the connection, especially Heather. "Do you think all this talk about family values is why I'm using family to talk about my friends?" Although I did not think it was that simple, I did agree. She had made a valuable connection between her language use and politics, and I wanted to encourage it. Insights like this do not happen all of the time. Obviously, for the purpose of this paper, I wanted to start out with the strongest example of which I have record. Heather happened to be a student open for new interpretations of the culture around her, so possibilities intrigued her.

The discussion concluded with debate about what family values meant, and then we talked about the need for more specific examples in Heather's paper so that an audience could see what her friends were like. Heather turned in a final revision that was quite good in terms of detail, but she never did resolve the problem of "family." She simply talked about how difficult it was to describe and to define this relationship with her clique. I felt this was a tremendous success. Her paper's title, "The Ties that Bind," now seemed more of a reference to why she couldn't abandon her blood family than it did an explanation of how her group of friends stayed together. She didn't refer to her friends as her second family by the final draft, but in my interview with her, she mentioned how it felt like something was missing by not using the word.

> Maybe I just haven't found the right word, yet. I don't know. I feel like a lot of choices are gone, you know? They've already been made, and I'm kind of stuck. I was thinking that I was cheapening my friends by calling them my family, then I was thinking, I don't know, I was thinking that maybe it was what they had become, but then, it was like, no, no, there's gotta be something that's stronger.

I asked her why the word *friends* wasn't good enough. She referred to another class discussion we had engaged in regarding the term "just friends."

> You were right when you said people always use "just" in front of the word. "Just friends" means you're not, you know, like sleeping together or something,

> but it kind of does, well, it does put the friend in second place. I'm not talking about guys I sleep with here [in the paper], but "friends" all by itself means second place, maybe second to family or to boyfriends. I don't know. It just doesn't say enough.

Since I was the interviewer, her responses to how the class went and whether I had intimidated her and others into agreeing with me cannot be considered genuine data. However, it's worth mentioning that she did not feel any imposition of my political agenda upon her, and she enjoyed the class more than her others. Certainly, my approach did not stifle her creativity or keep her from thinking and writing critically.

In the same class, a student named Gina wrote an essay where my approach did not significantly affect her revision. The paper was about how she witnessed the birth of a horse on her farm. She referred to it as a miracle. I started at the word *miracle* and her basic logic, which was that miracles like birth make living worthwhile, but the dialogue in the class did not support me. I wanted to know why the birth of anything was miraculous when it happens millions of times everyday to virtually every known form of life. I asked what a miracle was and why Gina would choose that word to describe a commonplace event. Gina had nothing to say except for, "I don't know," and asking the class for responses garnered little. No one even mentioned the religious connotations behind the word *miracle.* I found myself repeating my questions, so I turned to asking for synonyms for miracle.

"Something special," Matt said, but he added that calling the event special would be more "bland" than calling it a miracle.

My older student Jeff said maybe it was something that only happened once. "A miracle is unique and individual."

"So maybe Gina's use of this word is connected somehow to a common belief that every life is sacred and that every baby born is an individual." I thought I had turned a corner.

"But that's not it," Gina said quickly. "I'm talking about my experience. I saw this birth and I helped Pinky [the horse's name] deliver it. That's the miracle. I was there."

Through discussion, it came up that she had never seen a birth before. "So our first encounter with something makes it miraculous? Would it be a miracle also the second or third time you see it?" There were some murmurs in the class, but no specific response.

"What if Gina hadn't been there?" I asked. "Would it still have been a miracle?" But I was talking to myself, so I switched to reading her conclusion. She wrote:

> Maybe I'm crazy but, this miracle of life has really given me an appreciation for living. Because of this event I've looked at life in a whole new way. As I see

> it life may have it's ups and downs, but miracles really do happen and that makes it all worth while.

After I read this, Jeff commented that it was a little vague and that Gina needed to tell how she looked at life previously for her audience to see how her perspective had changed. Gina wrote this down, and I nodded in agreement. We talked about how she was looking at life, but it was as vague as her conclusion. I focused on her use of the word *new.*

"Do you mean that it is a new way as in innovative?"

She shook her head. "It was different for me."

"But your theory here sounds like a really old philosophy to me. There's not much different here than many other people say everyday."

Gina was getting frustrated, and I wasn't getting much feedback from her or the class. "I'd never heard of it before."

"You'd never heard that life has its ups and downs?"

"Yeah, I'd heard that, but..." Gina's face was getting red as her words trailed off, which was a sign to me that she was on the spot and that I had to stop. At these times, I usually direct the questioning to the class, but my points had been lost, so I summed things up, which I hate to do because I fear it looks like closure to the students as compared to dialogue, which keeps the issues open. "There's many reasons Gina might have used these words, but I'd like to connect it to what we hear all the time. Keep in mind that no personal thoughts are conceived outside ideology. I think that we describe commonplace events such as births as miracles because it preserves in our minds that we're all unique individuals rather than rhetorical or social constructions. The fact that Gina witnessed this birth is a point she brought up that made it miraculous. I wonder if she would say that the dozen births that took place in the county hospital the same night were miracles, too? What about all of the flies and mice that were born that night as well? I don't think so; it was her personal encounter with Twiggy's birth [the foal's name] that made it special for her. But to an audience, in constructing reality, the word *miracle* would seem inappropriate. A miracle is something that defies natural explanation and that's often attributed to divine intervention. By associating life with the divine, you can see the link with the word *miracle* and the political, especially in issues like abortion and euthanasia. It might be the word that feels right for Gina, but it's not politically innocent and in the context of the essay, the connection to a change of philosophy for her has not been spelled out clearly enough for it to be considered miraculous."

I chalked this episode up as a complete failure at first. My conference with Gina yielded little, and my ending statement gave her an opening, I think, to still use the word *miracle* in her last revision. She added a not so specific example of her new appreciation of living and still attributed it all to the miracle of life. However, this type of epistemic approach, especially with the whole class critique, has effects on the other students when they are writing. Whether they're being merely careful in language choice for the sake of accuracy or whether they're considering political connotations in their words, students think about their own writing based on what is said in critiques of other papers. Jeff, for instance, mentioned Gina's paper when I asked him whether my politics intimidated him or stifled his creativity.

> They [the politics] made me think.... I didn't get scared or nothing, but I had to think about what I was writing. I even looked at others and had to think about mine. Remember in that one about the horse? I kept thinking, man, there's so many ideologies out there that...man, you gotta watch it. Simple things get weird really quick. But just that time made me think about birth. I watched my daughter get born, and it was fantastic, a fantastic experience.... But I now think, that, well, it was great for me, but that my reaction wasn't that different from anyone else's. What else? Creativity? [I indicated yes] I don't know if there's too much creativity in writing to begin with [laughs].[6] But really, I don't know. That chick with the horse might have felt something, like she couldn't say what she wanted, but if you look at it, it gets more creative by doing what we do, really looking into words and all.

It seems to me that some of the silences and lack of responses could have been moments of learning for other students, even if Gina had become flustered. It's worth noting, though, that far from becoming intimidated, she stuck to her convictions in her writing. Even if my method might have produced silence in that one class, it did not silence Gina's pen. She obviously did not revise her paper to please me and to cater to my political agenda.

These political moments have value beyond individual student revision. Leslie, the student I mentioned earlier, wrote two essays during the course of the semester that brought out issues concerning feminism quite blatantly. The first one was about her friends teasing her because of her moral choices in life. They felt she was naive about the world. She believed these "feminists" were cold and cruel and that it was "really no wonder that the country is in the shape that it's in today" because people with morals "are looked down upon." The second essay was about her entering a beauty pageant and how just competing was fulfillment enough.

Leslie was resistant to most of the comments made by the class. Some were insulted by her first essay, and I did not have to say much to show that her view of reality was not taking into consideration her audience or her language use. The issue brought up by her classmates was that Leslie said that all of her characteristics were "chosen" by her, but in her first sentence, she attributed her values to a Christian upbringing and a loving, supportive family. Many felt she was being condescending and assuming her beliefs were superior to others. I commented on her use of the word *feminism*, and the roles she felt men and women should uphold (men should take care of their wives and be the head of the household, and so forth), but apparently I was just repeating the lines of previous teachers who had questioned her. I tried to examine what it meant to be naive, but I didn't get beyond the synonym "inexperienced," which was offered up by a classmate and rejected by Leslie. Finally, I said, "Do you feel that at this point in your life, you've learned all there is to know?"

"No," she said, "there are all sorts of facts and knowledge that I don't know."

"Doesn't the accumulation of knowledge lead to changes in how we view things?"

"No," she said. "Everything I learn will strengthen my beliefs."

Some students had scoffed at her earlier—to themselves, but loudly enough to be heard—and I heard a couple of snorts then that I had to quiet with a stare. But I had come to an important question, one that was good for the class if not for Leslie. "What is knowledge?"

Our discussion was heated and even broke into individual groups. I felt like I was out of control, but I eventually rounded people together. "Is knowledge personal or communal?" I asked the group.

"It has to be verified by someone," Herb answered. "It can't just be your beliefs and your ideas." He had been particularly miffed at some of Leslie's condemnations of the world and shot a glance at her.

"So does knowledge change you?" I asked.

Many said it would have to. "So is that bad?" I continued. I was surprised that no one answered. And due to the many responses, the class ended on that question.

Leslie was a student who felt I was imposing my beliefs on her, and in reviewing my notes, I can see where she might think that. Certainly by asking her, in essence, if she already knew everything, I was hinting that she didn't. But I could not see where I had told her to revise in such a way as to change her point of view. My notes indicate that I spoke about the polemic nature of her argument and asked her if that wasn't the same structure of logic being used against her by her friends. I also asked her to discuss what she meant by feminism and she admitted in conference she had just used that word, that her friends were not feminists but merely women who were teasing her about her values. I had similar notes about her paper concerning the beauty pageant. In class, I asked her why women make friends and family proud by being beautiful, an inference I gathered from her paper. She said it wasn't a beauty pageant; she had to do many other things to prepare herself for the contest. But as we reviewed the criteria in class (congeniality, presentation, poise and posture, and so on), it became pretty clear that the criteria were those of a beauty contest.

Somewhere inside, I think Leslie knew this, but was, perhaps, afraid to say to me, "Yes, it was a beauty contest. So what?" In that sense, then, the politics I had revealed about myself might have indeed silenced her. The authority

I wielded as the instructor might have made her think twice about being too confrontational. Yet, she wrote these papers understanding to a degree that I would be opposing her. One way to look at the classroom, then, is to see that she felt free enough to challenge me. She did not deviate from any of her positions in her papers, and I gave her an "A" in the class. She probably did feel cheated by the lack of affirmation in our discussions, but ultimately she was able to write on what she wanted, and if length is any indicator, she was stimulated, not impeded, by the type of comments given to her.[7] I felt she did not learn as much as she could have, but her presence in the classroom helped others learn. I had an especially in depth discussion about sororities with the women and men in the classroom, and they were exploring the underlying assumptions of the Greek system, investigating many of the ideas about gender roles and how women position themselves in society that I traced back to the discussions with Leslie. And I do not think Leslie's rights as an individual were sacrificed to the dialogic understanding of reality that emerged. She felt that by the time she had finished revising her papers, they were no longer hers, but her revisions were not changes of position, but additions of concrete details, and in the one essay, a better sense of audience. The word *feminism* was gone, as she realized her friends were not really speaking for feminists, but I do not think that such a deletion constitutes an unethical act on my part.[8]

The difficulty with this type of data collection is relying on myself as the researcher. My notes can tell me much, but what I saw obviously was limited by my role as the instructor, both in the practical sense that I'm also involved in running the class and in the obvious conflict between wanting to see my approach in the best light possible and honestly reporting negative aspects of my courses. To avoid this, I tried different data gathering approaches in other semesters and quarters. I had my students videotape one class, which was a very interesting experience. What they focused on was perhaps different than what I would have, but the overall impression, supported by independent observations of the tape, is that the class was highly democratic. If students were silenced or intimidated in any way, it was not indicated by their participation in the class, their facial expressions, the steadiness of their voices, or the content of their analyses. The tape included a session that shows how the dialectic can work for more sensitive social understanding, and how language becomes a crucial part of that.

The conflict regarding language was clear in one short exchange between a student, Judy, and the writer of one paper, Melanie. Melanie's paper was about sexual molestation. She had not believed the victim and felt bad when she discovered he had been telling the truth. Judy read one line from the paper: "To this day, I still blame myself for being mad at him."

"Is *blame* the right word to use?" she asked. "I was thinking maybe guilt or something." Her voice suddenly became lower. "But it's up to you."

I can't tell what Melanie had said to make Judy back down so quickly and to affirm the rights of individual expression after making what I thought was a keen observation. Perhaps it had just been a look, but somewhere Judy almost denounced the idea of language (and reality) as a social construct in favor of a private vision. More discussions about language, and the personal versus the social emerged, however, so I never returned to this particular issue.

One student, Mary, wanted to know if the victim had gone into detail with her. "I shouldn't really tell. I didn't know whether I should be writing about this, explaining every little detail. I mean, I did explain it, but I didn't want to go further."

"How come?" I asked.

"Just because it's so secret between people." The perplexities behind the word *secret* came up later, but apparently the only reason Melanie was willing to write the paper was because none of us in the class knew him. "There are some details I had to leave out to protect him, though," she finished.

Mary pressed another language choice after some questions about the relationship between the molester and the victim. "You wrote here that, 'Since I had such a normal life...' What is a normal life? Some people might think a two story house with a white picket fence, but that's not 'normal.'"

"What I meant by that is that we didn't have any problems. No alcohol or drugs or divorce," she said.

"Sounds like you're pretty abnormal to me," I said, which drew laughter from the class. "Let me interject here because it's a really good point. The word *normal* does say an awful lot about what you believe the world is and what the world should be. If that's what you're trying to convey, I would try to get into more what you mean because there are considerable political assumptions based on that word."

I was trying to be gentle, but what I was getting at was that by calling herself "normal," she was stigmatizing him, the victim, as "abnormal." Later, one of the students, Tim, picked up on a section where Melanie also said how "different" it was from her family, but at this point, for some reason, Tim sensed a rescue was in need, and he complimented Melanie on what a good topic it was and how a lot of people would have avoided writing about it. I couldn't tell from the tape that Melanie was feeling any distress, but Tim was a pretty good gauge for things like that, so my reaction indicated I was deferring to his judgment.

However, the question came up, "Does he know you wrote this?"

Melanie's answer was a little confusing. He apparently knew she'd written some of it, but he didn't know it was going to be read by the whole class. "I don't think he'd be mad," she said. "None of you know him. I think he'd get something out of it."

Another student, Tonya, said that if someone had written about a secret she had told to that person, she would be really angry. There was always tension between Melanie and Tonya, and Melanie took this as a personal jab. I made a joke, but got back to the issue I wanted to pursue. Rhetoric dealt with matters of truth, and a topic like that one, as personal as it was, was just the sort that needed to be questioned and sorted through.

"He is the victim here and in a sense, he's supposed to be embarrassed because he's the victim. I don't think people should be embarrassed about this." The class fell silent, and the camera quite astutely panned the room. At the time, I imagine I felt awkward, as though I had stepped onto the soapbox, which concerns me because the class becomes monologic, but I kept talking. However, the tape shows the students being very contemplative. The trickiness of the situation and the delicacy it required were quite apparent, but these were just the type of questions that rhetoric is meant to deal with. It opened the class up to issues and terms that they'd never talked openly about before, except perhaps in locker room talk, where profanities had probably been substituted for the words used here. I asked Melanie about detail, and although she did not want to talk about it, words like "sodomy" and "oral copulation" were discussed without the usual first-year college student snickers. The context of the questions and the language choices constructed a reality here that I'm positive worked toward the benefit of the entire class. Unfortunately, I have no record of my conference with Melanie later in the semester, but if my memory can be relied on, she told me that she had a new appreciation for the subject.

Another interesting effect of this epistemic approach is the call to action it sometimes elicits. It is a decision not lightly taken to encourage students to go from writing about a subject to doing something about it. With this method, though, it is a line I have not had to cross. The dialogic produces an atmosphere conducive to political involvement. The subject, in this instance, was an essay by Mary talking about the "safety hazards" on campus. The class discussion centered on language use, as one student, Donna, pointed out the connotations of "hazards" and how it didn't fit such things as the taste of the cafeteria food. Tim recognized that the order of the essay was a problem in determining how "hazard" should be used, while other students asked for more detail to see the validity of her claim that the campus administration was not doing enough to prevent accidents from happening.

The intriguing part came when a student was asking to see the direct connection between a student pulling a fire alarm and another student breaking her leg. Mary was doing her best, but there was a conflict between her blame of the administration for not giving proper care to these situations and the personal responsibility of students.

"You know, I know one of the people who pull fire alarms," Tonya said. "After I read this paper, I called him up and told him not to do it again or I would report him."

Another student said he had called the police to report the person who pulled the alarm, but that they wouldn't do anything about it. "They said it was my word against theirs, so they wouldn't file a report." This action, as the result of one paper, was astonishing. It might seem minor, but seeing themselves in a dialectic relationship with reality gave these two students a sense of agency. How many times before, after all, had these students surrendered individual loyalty to a friend or an acquaintance in favor of a societal responsibility to safety?

CONCLUSION

Taken together, these examples demonstrate that accusations of intimidation, silencing, and stifling are more complicated than Hairston and other theorists have considered. Much is left to do, of course, in researching the effects of overt politicization of a writing classroom. My data collection is merely a start toward gleaning the information needed to ensure that we are engaging in ethical and sound pedagogies. I feel the epistemic approach I am using puts political rigor within the framework of the writing process, while safeguarding the students against loss of freedom and more extreme pedagogical mistakes, such as indoctrination and inequity in grading. While it might make some students uncomfortable and challenge them in ways unfamiliar to them, a beginning emerges for these writers, which is what I believe education should do for each individual.

As a burgeoning discipline, composition must strive for acceptance as something beyond a series of remedial and service courses. Our rhetorical theories open up many options for individual teachers, all of them invariably political, and we cannot shrink from our responsibility out of fear that we might lose our unique standing as experts on the writing process. Our mission is evolving and professors who dreaded teaching composition years ago are now seeing something exciting and worthwhile in the old English 101. We need to embrace them, whether they be critical theorists or old-time literary scholars, and use their understandings to supplement ours, just as ours must supplement theirs. Ultimately, if we view ourselves as advocates of the transactional nature of reality and have the backing of the other half of our departments, we will have found the subject for our discipline—language as a mediator—and we can assume a stronger position in the education of university and college students. This, I sense, should be our collective goal as compositionists.

NOTES

[1] Not that I feel this definition by any means will end the dispute or the argument for depoliticized classrooms. On the contrary, I imagine that the argument against

my definition will be that the fray was created by agitation from the left and that, therefore, my attempt to stigmatize standard or traditional pedagogies as political is in itself politically motivated. I do not know how to get around this argument without digressing into a polemic. It's clear to me that change occurs through movements that question the dominant ideology, and if the left is currently the political force pushing the boundaries of how we understand ourselves, I have to listen, as I do not think the status quo is working. However, I'm not adverse to listening to counterarguments. I simply have not heard any that go beyond a reliance on the belief in objectivity, and I think if we are to take the findings of quantum physics and apply them to our field, as we should, we cannot embrace objectivity in any of our arguments.

[2] This understanding of Hairston's pedagogy aligns nicely with the critique Strickland (1993) makes about her arguments against politics in the classroom, as he sees her actions, as I mentioned earlier, as an attempt to rescue the concept of the individual. In the May 1993 issue of *CCC*, Hairston chooses not to rebut this and the other counterstatements against her article, "Diversity, Ideology, and Teaching Writing," but evidence in her previous scholarship suggests she cannot be categorized as a reductive expressivist. She has called upon cognitive research in her earlier work and has stated that learning to write involves learning several discourses, not just the personal. It should be noted that expressivist rhetoric is only one type of subjective rhetoric and that the boundaries between the categories merge on occasion.

[3] Issues of antifoundationalism and postmodernism would undoubtedly confuse students even more, but I would hope that no teacher would be as contradictory as to promote authentic voice then base comments to student papers on issues of antifoundationalism or postmodernism.

[4] When the students read their peers' papers, it is a pedagogical choice with important implications. In an earlier work, when I was still sorting through this pedagogical approach, I advocated that sign-up sheets be passed out well in advance for workshop days, so that students have their essays ready the day before they are to be critiqued in class. I suggested that the students bring enough copies for each member of the class to read, and that everyone should read the essays at home and come prepared to discuss the papers. Half of the class is reading while the other half is trying to sort through the issues brought up in their reading. Reading ahead of time helps me prepare as an instructor, but I'm finding that fresh readings in class, with everyone reading along, or in small groups reading together, make it seem less like an exercise in evaluation and more like a way of reading, a critical thinking practice in which they can participate, that they can make their own. Insights that I might see later in a more careful reading can be brought up in individual conferences or in relation to another student's paper with a similar idea. It's not uncommon for me to say something like, "Seeing how you used the word *weird* in your description reminds me of how Henry used it in his paper two weeks ago. Maybe we can refer back to that while we're talking about this use of the word."

[5] When I use professional texts in my writing classrooms, I often use them simply as springboards toward interpretations of culture. However, I have based student assignments on readings while using tenets of this epistemic approach. This allows students to investigate the rhetoric of someone other than themselves, thus taking

some of the risk of self-discovery out of the classroom, while still challenging them along ideological lines. I usually push students toward positioning their lives within the framework of the text, though, which yields conflicts between understandings of reality—a move that still takes the students back to their own language to study where the differences are occurring and what they mean towards negotiating truth.

[6] Jeff was a noted drummer for a local band, and he sometimes would tease me about how one-dimensional writing was when so many factors went into creating music. I think his laugh was in reaction to previous discussions we had had.

[7] The two essays mentioned were six and seven pages long. Leslie's earlier work, where she did not directly challenge political topics, averaged a little over two pages.

[8] I should make it clear that I was not satisfied with my progress with this student, but I think in most classes, under traditional grading processes, her essays would be considered more polished than others I liked better in my class. Leslie never problematized her language use, which, as I've stated, is more important to me as a teacher than the issues she did attend to.

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chapter 4

Refiguring Classroom Authority

Andrea A. Lunsford
Ohio State University

"Authority" is a troubled term today, I wish to argue, precisely because of the ethical issues it raises for teachers of writing and reading. I hope in the beginning of this chapter to foreground what I take to be the crux of these issues by sketching in two very different scenes. In the first, two bright and talented graduate students are reflecting on "authority." One remarks that he has recently dropped the term altogether from his statement of teaching philosophy: "I spent most of the term writing in my journal about ethical issues of authority—my authority in the classroom, the authority of published authors, the authority of academic discourse, and so on. It occurred to me . . . that the term 'authority'carried with it, at least in my mind, negative connotations. It suggests a top-down pedagogy, where the teacher and his pet theorists are in the know and students are in need of enlightenment" (N. Gray, personal communication, November 14, 1995). Another student, engaged in preparing for a research project on writing, worries about the ethics of ethnographic techniques, knowing the interpretation inevitably carries some degree of appropriation. "For this reason," she says, "I believe it is important to share our stories and interpretations with informants, to negotiate with them in the construction and telling. This is a practice that, I'm embarrassed to admit, I don't often carry out when I write essays. For as much as I fear and question my own authority and interpretations, I don't hand them over to others easily. The fact that other interpretations may differ significantly from my own is both frightening and disconcerting to me; this fear largely results from my conservative religious upbringing where interpretations were not negotiable, where certain interpretations (mainly the interpretations of men) were authoritative and privileged, and all others were deemed 'wrong'" (M. Goldthwaite, personal communication, November 10, 1995).

Compare these two graduate students' thoughts on the ethics of teacherly authority to the following paraphrase of a college president's remarks at a national conference on ethics and teaching. "I love authority," he said, and he went on to say that he used authority "powerfully" in all his classrooms, as did those great teachers that he held in such high regard, and that students "better all know this" before they take his course. Whereas the graduate student teachers were wary of "authority" because it represents, potentially, power over others (and particularly over students), the college president suggests that such authoritative power, if based on the respect due to deep knowledge and experience, can be used appropriately to inspire students. Now college presidents are by definition in positions of extraordinary power, while graduate student teachers are not, but I pass over the remarkable power differential at work here to focus instead on these two competing senses in which "authority" can inform classroom teaching, for the operative definition will contribute substantially to the ethos of any class, may in fact be the most significant factor in establishing that ethos. In this chapter, I intend to trace my own understandings of the term "authority," to reflect on how negative associations with "authority" can work against our best efforts at establishing ethical classroom communities, and to suggest that unless we can recuperate the positive associations with authority—as a source of knowledge and experience we can and should respect, we may be better off to eschew the term altogether.

In "On Authority in the Study of Writing," Peter Mortensen and Gesa Kirsch (1993) offer an extremely valuable analysis of the term "authority," review feminist critiques of the term and its practices, and argue that those in composition studies should try to move "beyond a notion of authority based on autonomy, individual rights, and abstract rules," and toward a classroom model and a classroom ethos "based on dialogue, connectedness, and contextual rules" (p. 557). That is to say, we should try to enact a model that would combine the best of the college president's vision of authority with the best of the graduate students' thinking on how to act responsibly in terms of our own classroom authority. Indeed, on the face of it, such a move should be possible, at least definitionally, for—as Hannah Arendt (1958) notes—the word "authority" is related etymologically to Latin terms for "augment" as well as "to make to grow, to promote or increase," and, of course, "to originate" (as in the word *author*). These terms all suggest connection and reciprocity. As a 1602 text has it (with a very early use of the word "author" in English), "a good God may not aucthor noysome things." That is to say, a "good God," who claims our deepest respect, may not "nurture, make grow, or augment" noysome things. But as Mortensen and Kirsch also point out, this sense of authority as an act of nurturing or augmenting long ago gave way to authority as associated with radical individualism and with various forms of discursive and institutional power.[1]

As these remarks suggest, I, like a number of other scholars in composition (see, for example, Berlin, 1988; Bizzell, 1992; Brodkey, 1996; Clark, 1994; Clark & Ede, 1990; Crowley, 1998; Ronald, 1990; Shor, 1992), have been thinking about authority, and our students' relationships to it, for some time now, and the occasion of this chapter has allowed me an opportunity to think at least briefly about the stages my thinking has gone through in relationship to this concept. I should perhaps say flatly that I do not—as a woman, teacher, or researcher positioned as I am in a predominantly white, middle-class institution of higher education—have any definitive "answers" to the problem of authority. Indeed, my relationship to the term seems to me more conflicted than ever before. When I first started working on a draft of this chapter, for example, I sat down and wrote a series of journal entries in which I tried to trace my shifting understandings of and attempts at enactments of classroom authority—from the late 1960s when I first began to teach, through my Ph.D.-seeking years, and on to my teaching and administering experiences since then. I found, somewhat to my chagrin, that I have been fairly predictable in my relationship to the concept of "authority:" In the 1960s and early 1970s, I assumed authority was something outside of me, something that, with a lot of luck, I as a teacher of writing could find and perhaps even borrow, something I had learned to assume was politically and ideologically neutral. In the mid-1970s and early 1980s, I struggled to find ways to inhabit authority, both as a woman and as a member of the beleaguered field of composition studies—and I sought to help students inhabit authority as well. As I became more and more preoccupied with acts of collaboration and with feminist and poststructuralist critiques, I sought to reject traditional notions of authority, too often, as I think now, by a kind of simple substitution through inversion. Studying Foucault (1979) reminded me, however, that "notions that are intended to replace the privileged position of the author [and authority] actually seem to preserve that privilege and suppress the real meaning" of these terms (p. 143). And close encounters of a teacherly kind brought Foucault's message home to me in a number of professional and personal ways. As a result, I found myself venting in my journal, "I'm more confused—and I'm certainly more irritated—with the term 'authority' than I have ever been. How can I build the kind of classroom ethos I value, one based on dialogue and mutual respect and give-and-take, on connectedness and sharing, if the negative dynamics of authority-as-power undercut my very best efforts? Why is 'authority' causing me so much grief?!?"

THE TROUBLE WITH AUTHORITY

As I've thought of the term and its many associations, I've come to locate the "trouble with authority" in relation to three particular problems (for another explication of this troubling term, see Kathleen B. Jones's "The Trouble with Authority" [1991]). First, authority is tied historically, politically, and perhaps irrevocably to the "author construct." As Martha Woodmansee has been telling us since at least 1984, this "author construct"—which evolved in 17th-century Europe—depended on a definition of "author" as originary creator of unique works. Indeed, as Linda Brodkey (1987), Rebecca Howard (1995), and Lisa Ede and I (1990) have long argued, our society generally continues to think of "authorship" as solitary and originary and to protect this construct with an amazingly intricate and seemingly endless patchwork of copyright and patent legislation, with narrower and narrower interpretations of "fair use" and "public space," with continuing emphasis on "original" contributions to scholarship or "original" student work, and with stringent proscriptions against plagiarism.[2] Thus, the author construct and its ally authority have been linked to conceptions of property and individuality in the capitalist West since the founding of our Republic.

Mounting a critique on the "author construct" has been an ongoing part of poststructuralist projects for some time now, heralded perhaps by the dramatic (and as it turns out greatly exaggerated) announcement of the "death of the author" by Roland Barthes in 1968 and the lengthy autopsy performed by Michel Foucault (1979), who argued that it is more appropriate to speak of author "functions" than of authors and to see these functions as contested sites in a complex world of political, scientific, cultural, economic, ideological, and other forces. As the work of Mortensen and Kirsch (1993) makes clear, a concomitant critique of teacherly "authority" has been ongoing and has attempted to realize and interrogate a series of "authority functions" and in some ways to invoke a sense of authority that is free—or at least partially free—from the handicaps and ideological baggage of the "author."

But to date, at least, it hasn't worked. As a result, any number of theorists have noted the compelling and persuasive tendency to continue to link "authority" to autonomous individualism, to a unique, stable, and unified self who creates. In short, in spite of efforts to the contrary (such as Mortensen and Kirsch's), "authority" seems still to be figured predominantly as radically individual and as masculine. To the extent that authority is bound to authorship, then, it is tied, as I have just tried to argue, to radical individualism in the Western world, to the kind of individualism that has led us to valorize the genius in the garret, the lone ranger in the saddle, the Marlboro man riding west in countless commercials, the iconoclast in the mass media who will "do it my way." That in our culture this radical individual should be overwhelmingly masculine is no surprise. Nor is it a surprise that authority has persistently, in the West, been figured as masculine. As Kathleen Jones (1987) notes, "the standard analysis of authority in modern Western political theory" has always "excluded females and values associated with the feminine" (p. 152).[3] So the second major problem with "authority," in my mind at least, is that it is still, for all intents and purposes, individual, masculine, and therefore exclusionary. In our society, authority functions as judgmental and as hierarchical.

Judgment, hierarchy, and exclusion call up a third major problem with authority: its aim, in the West, has traditionally been to control or to gain power over others. Indeed, the *Oxford English Dictionary* lists the first meaning of the word as "power to enforce obedience." As Kathleen Jones (1987) puts it, the "standard view of authority is of a mode of discourse that gives expression to rank, order, definition, and distinction.... In Western political philosophy it is common to regard authority as a distinctive type of social control" or even of force (pp. 155–156). It would take more time and space than I have here, or than I would want to take, to trace the historical deployment of authority as power over others—and of power that is individual and masculine and, of course, "authorized." I have wished to invoke these troubling aspects of what I've been calling the "problems" with authority, however, not to trace their histories or their intricate linkages but to suggest that, taken as a triumvirate, these "problems"—Western conceptions of authorship, of masculine, exclusionary individualism, and of power relationships as hierarchical and judgmental—are the very things that have made authority in many ways ideal as an informing metaphor for traditional classrooms. Only recently have teachers of writing and reading come to question that metaphor, to question what that metaphor means for continuing to view our classrooms as places in which teaching or learning has even a slim chance of occurring. As Henry Giroux (1994) remarked in *The Journal of Advanced Composition*, "the emergence of the electronic media coupled with a diminishing faith in the power of human agency has undermined the traditional visions of schooling and the meaning of pedagogy. The language of lesson plans and upward mobility and the forms of teacher authority on which it was based has been radically delegitimized by the recognition that culture and power are central to the authority/knowledge relationship" (p. 360).

As scholar/teachers as different as Giroux, Susan Miller (1989), Jim Berlin (1988), Lisa Ede (1996), John Trimbur (1989), and Anne Gere (1994a) have pointed out, our classrooms have been built on—and have valorized—individualism, ranking, hierarchy, and therefore—we have belatedly come to understand—exclusion. And they have been sites for the deployment of power and control over what Giroux (1994) calls the "authority/knowledge relationship." Every time we "place" students, every time we "clep" or "exempt" students, every time we give a grade, we are deploying traditional authority and using power in traditional ways to authorize certain kinds of knowledge and to deauthorize others. Recognition of this fact of academic life has led not only to a serious and ongoing critique of the ethics of institutional authority/power, but also to attempts to refigure authority and to develop new relationships and new ways of being in the classroom and in the academy. Many of these attempts have been carried out by feminist theorists and teachers, and it is their work that Mortensen and Kirsch (1993) draw on in searching for a model of authority based on dialogue, connectedness, and context; that Kathleen Jones (1991) draws on in attempting to think of authority "not as border-patrolling, boundary-engendering, but as meaning-giving...and gift-giving" (p. 123); that David Bleich (1993) draws on in attempting to define the classroom as a space in which "socially generous research" takes place among teachers and students; that Patrocinio Schweickert (1986) draws on in working on an ethics of care; that John Trimbur (1989) draws on in an attempt to distinguish between authority and authoritarianism; that Lisa Ede and Suzanne Clark (1990) draw on in their work on student resistance; that Anne Gere (1987) draws on in sketching the outlines of a "group ethic" for the classroom; and that I, too, have drawn on in trying to contribute to a refiguring of authority.

REFIGURING AUTHORITY

We badly need these and similar efforts. Indeed, I would say that we desperately need them. As I have studied these efforts, I've come to see some common themes and commonalities among the attempts to refigure authority. Stated briefly, the teachers and scholars I have read and talked to all seem to be reaching beyond classroom models based on traditional conceptions of authority to define not a classroom *authority*, but a classroom *ethos* based on dialogism and connection (and hence struggle) rather than on hierarchy and order; on constructions of a person as a range of selves that are materially situated rather than a stable and autonomous individual; on aims of exploration, reflexivity, and negotiation rather than on power and control. If we are to recuperate "authority" for our classrooms at all, it seems to me clear that these common themes must be pursued.

As Lucille McCarthy and Stephen Fishman (1996) point out, however, such recuperation will be anything but easy. In a fascinating dual study, "Community in the Expressivist Classroom," McCarthy and Fishman trace a series of distinctions between liberal and communitarian concepts and uses of authority. Analyzing the confused and sometimes conflicting uses of these differing constructs of authority in his own classrooms, Fishman concludes that the two kinds of authority "can work together," but that they often "work at cross purposes" (p. 70). I am grateful for McCarthy and Fishman's careful analysis and critique, for it suggests by example the degree to which attempts at refiguring authority will not necessarily—perhaps even cannot—undo, but may instead only disguise or suppress the desires of authorship, masculine individualism, and control. As Chandra Mohanty (1994) points out, these efforts at refiguring often work against a teacher's own best intentions, precisely because she is unable to release authority from its ties with Western hierarchical individualism. For example, Mohanty says that classrooms based on collaboration often continue to see groups as collections of individuals, as essentially an aggregate of units that ideally embody difference. She goes on to say:

> One very important ideological effect of this is the standardization of behaviors and responses so as to make them predictable (and thus manageable) across a wide variety of situations and circumstances. If complex structural experiences of domination and resistance can be ideologically reformulated as individual behaviors and attitudes, they can be managed while carrying on business as usual." (pp. 157–158)

Anne Gere (1994b) makes a similar point when she says that

> it is possible to adopt pedagogical practices [like collaboration, for example] without adopting the assumptions that underlie them.... [Such] discontinuities between approaches based on different theories create problems for any group of students, but they pose particular difficulties for women and people of color who typically stand at the margins of academic discourse.... Conflicted approaches can undermine the tenuous confidence of these persons who often occupy the newest and most vulnerable positions in the academy.

So we shouldn't fool ourselves that creating new models of authority, new spaces for students and teachers to experience nonhierarchical, shared authority, is a goal we can hope to reach in any sort of straightforward way. To make the difficulties we face as concrete as possible, I wish to offer three home-grown stories. The first concerns the perceptions that undergraduates may bring to the classroom regarding authority. I recently had an opportunity to ask a large group of undergraduates to consider—very briefly—the word *authority*, and to jot down the very first things that came to mind when they heard that word. Consider the following representative sample.

With almost no exceptions, students associated the word *authority* with either an individual or with an abstract idea or feeling. Among persons, the most often associated with "authority" were these: the police, principals, parents, teachers, bosses, government officials, dictators (one student said flatly, "authority is Adolf Hitler"), fathers, and government "big guys." Some students were more detailed in their descriptions of these "authorities." One, for instance, says that authority calls up the image of "a high strung man giving me directions," while another says "a man who tells you what to do, when to do it, and how to do it."

"When I hear the word *authority*, another student says, I think of a person who is in control of me and who is mean and unfair."

"My first image of the word *authority* is a police officer—or maybe an older person, all bent over and pointing a long finger at a younger person."

"The first thing I think of is a tall, deep-voiced person telling me what to do."

And, finally, a response that particularly intrigued me: "Authority: someone I would never, ever, ever date."

Those students who focused on ideas and feelings called up similar negative images: "Authority makes me think of being in trouble—big time." "Something I don't have," said another; and one student simply wrote in large all capital letters: "BAD, DEMEANING, UGH." Several others suggest the same theme: "I hate authority; it scares me; it's no good." "Authority: the ability to manipulate people like me into doing what they want, even when I don't want to." "A sense of control, of being on a pedestal over others"; "Authority causes fear"; and "Authority is power that is abused."

In the hundreds of these student responses I read over, I found only half a dozen that carried positive connotations of any kind; I found none that mentioned people who were perceived to be supportive or helpful; I found none that identified themselves in any way as having authority, or even wanting it; I found none that mentioned women. It would be a mistake to make any particular claims based on this random and haphazard group of responses. In fact, I am not interested in generalizing or in trying to make claims about what these students report, except to say that for these students, at least, all of our efforts to empower, to allow students to share, experience, and seize authority may be working against perceptions and attitudes that will be resistant to our strongest efforts. More troubling, perhaps, and in some important ways they should be. For in one way at least, these students are dead on the mark: their associations with "authority" echo the *Oxford English Dictionary* definitions of the term; their experiences of it call up images of individuals who exercise control over them. In short, these students' perceptions epitomize the troubles with authority I've been trying to explore. But there's at least one more turn to this particular worm: Insofar as students bring expectations about teachers and authority to our classes with them, they are probably expecting that we will live and act out their experience of authority: that we will use power to manipulate and control them. (And, as Linda Brodkey, Susan Miller, Sharon Crowley, and others point out, in many ways we will.) These expectations, these deeply embedded perceptions of authority, mean that students who hold them will not easily be able to cede authority to teachers who act in ways that break their expectations. And if teachers cannot inhabit some form of efficacious authority in the classroom, they are not likely to be able to share it or to nurture it in others.

At one time in my career, it seemed reasonable enough to me to expect that the trouble with authority might disappear, or at least dissipate, in graduate classrooms. Another naive expectation, as I discovered. A few years ago, some students in one of my graduate seminars studied the dynamic in our class, beginning with an analysis of the course description I had written and the strategies I proposed for sharing authority in the classroom (students worked in groups, for instance, and were responsible for the direction class discussions took and for class activities; students also took turns monitoring the "process" or dynamics of the class, noting who spoke, who didn't, and so on, and offering reflections intended to reveal hierarchies at work). At the end of the seminar, two students conducted interviews of seminar members. What they found pointed out once again the "trouble with authority." As one student said:

> This course was actually a very traditional seminar despite the underlying theory Andrea was promoting and the classroom ethic she advocated. Grad students jockeyed for status and space/room to speak to the teacher. The students themselves were some of the most knowledgeable and most resistant to traditional pedagogies of control I know. Even so, the class as a whole reverted to the old approach: the teacher was the sole authority and held the power.

Another said, "I sensed undercurrents of tension; the class supposedly shared power and authority, but I felt the instructor wasn't completely comfortable with that." And another: "Though I liked Andrea's attempts at decentering power/authority, I don't think it always worked—and it seemed sometimes Andrea wasn't even aware of that. I don't think we always took Andrea's offers seriously either—it's the way we are conditioned." And finally, "I have learned that it is very difficult to expose the political forces that threaten to undermine any learning situation, but unless a ceaseless attempt is made to do so, a 'liberatory' classroom can be more oppressive than one that never espouses such an ideal" (see Goodburn and Mathis, 1993).

I was impressed at the time—and I am equally impressed now in recalling this study—that these graduate students were so thoughtfully self-reflective about the workings of our seminar; I am also impressed with how feeble were my attempts at establishing the kind of classroom ethos I thought I was aiming for. And I am impressed by the fact that, for all their comments to the contrary, these students did feel sufficiently "authorized" to mount the critique they did—and to share it with me. But mostly I am struck by how their expectations and what one student called their "conditioning," as well as my own unacknowledged or unrecognized desires for power/authority, constantly thwarted what we all thought we were trying to do.

Still more troubling to me are the students whose expectations lead them to see efforts to subvert and resist traditional patterns of authority and power as wrong-headed, as cop-outs, as, in fact, a cheat. In another seminar I taught very recently—and a seminar in which I hoped to invest authority in all members of the group and to share talking time equally among us—one student confronted me very early on, almost in a rage. "What is this!" she demanded. "I didn't pay thousands of dollars to sit here and listen to my peers. You're the teacher. Teach!!" And of course, in at least one important way, she had a point. I was the teacher. I should teach. I did have, I hoped, something real, something of substance, to offer the members of my seminar. The issue for me was over *how* I would teach in ways that would not reify the most traditional concepts and expectations of authority as power and control over others.

Readers who have stayed with me this far may be feeling fairly depressed about the state of affairs surrounding authority in the classroom. On my bad days, I share that depression, for it seems to me in many ways that authority may be unrecoverable, too freighted with the problems outlined here to be of any use in building an ethical classroom environment. I'm tempted to say, with one of my student respondents, "I hate authority! Get rid of it!!" And perhaps we ought to give the term itself a rest, a time-out in our pedagogical and scholarly conversations, as did the graduate student whose reflections I quoted earlier. Later, that same student decided "to substitute 'presence' for 'authority,'" for in contrast to the highly negative connotations that worried him about the latter term, "presence" as he defines it, "seems less absolute, suggesting both positive and negative qualities of teacher and texts. Thus, as I rewrote my teaching philosophy, my 'authority' in the classroom became my 'presence' in the classroom, and the 'authority' of academic discourse became the 'presence' of academic discourse" (N. Gray, personal communication, November 14, 1995).

AUTHORITY AS RESPONSIBILITY

Or perhaps we might turn to one of the word's earlier associations, to the sense of augmenting and giving and "making to grow," and explore these metaphors as the basis for what Anne Gere (1994b) calls a community ethic. What I have in mind in such a move is putting not authority but *responsibility* at the heart of such an ethic, responsibility in the sense of taking responsibility for words and actions and positions in the classroom, and in the sense of the *ability* to *respond*—respond-ability in the classroom. I am thinking, in making such a move, of all those students who identified authority as authority "over" someone or something. Might they think instead of responsibility *to*, of responsibility *for*, of responsibility *with*? If all members of a class agree or contract to take responsibility for their words, actions, and positions—to and with others in the class—then such responsibilities can become the basis for or sites of ongoing negotiation and for the construction of an ethical classroom community.

At the very least, if we cannot abandon the term "authority" (or if it will not abandon us), perhaps we can alternately succeed in disentangling it from *power.* As Russ Hunt wrote during the 1995 Inkshed Conference:

> I think it important—for students and for ourselves—to distinguish between power (that is Hitler and the cops) and authority (which is the weight experience and knowledge give). If they hear us and blindly obey, it's power and they learn nothing. If they hear and are persuaded (or not), it's authority, and maybe something can be learned. I want to help my students learn to understand authority rather than to fear power. (n.p.)

In later correspondence, Kenneth Bruffee (personal communication, July 29, 1995) has raised similar issues. "Where does academic power leave off and academic authority begin?" he asks. After sharing a brief series of examples drawn from his own experiences, examples intended to represent power without authority and vice versa, Bruffee reflects on the ways in which authority and power may be distinguished by the differences in their social construction. Perhaps, Bruffee suggests, "authority is constructed by social processes of voluntary association, whereas power is constructed by social processes of involuntary association." Which is to say, I would add, that power and authority, though clearly linked historically and materially, are often *experienced* in dramatically different ways. I can only wonder at how students experience, for instance, the authority of the college president who "loves authority," and who himself experiences authority as the source and reflection of broad and deep knowledge. I wonder if his students' definition (as well as their experiences) of the term often coincide with his.

I am very grateful for Hunt's and Bruffee's thinking on these issues, and for the work of all those attempting to construct an alternative classroom ethos. But I am not particularly sanguine about being able to make the move to a classroom ethic based on responsibilities rather than traditional authority, or to disentangle authority for power, because such a move cannot occur in and of itself. We must ask, then, what context could be conducive to such a move? What institutional factors must we change to allow for such a move? I can think of at least three: the way we use time, the way we use space, and the way we use rewards. The kinds of refiguring I have been invoking here—focusing on a community ethic that would recognize and value difference, on negotiating responsibilities, on developing inclusive understandings of authority—cannot easily occur in 10- or 14-week parcels of time; nor can they easily develop in cramped and inhospitable and highly institutionalized spaces. Least of all can they develop where the system of rewards (grades) are linked to traditional models of authority and authorship. So beyond the "problem with authority," we have a set of personal and institutional problems that work to constrain us and our students and to silently support—even demand—traditional forms of what I have called an increasingly "troubled" authority. Thus to reach the goal Peter Mortensen and Gesa Kirsch (1993) describe—a notion of authority based on dialogue, connectedness, and contextual rules seems next to impossible to me unless we can also work to uncover the silent supports of traditional authority I've tried briefly to call forth here.

And any uncovering can only take place through disrupting exclusive and exclusionary constructions of authority, in locating the ideologies of our own positions of authority, much as the graduate student/teachers I quoted in opening this chapter are doing. We have to question, constantly, our motives and investments. We have to be committed, as a colleague at Ohio State said recently, to giving up, to sharing privileges—even when it *doesn't work.* Especially, perhaps, when it doesn't work. Indeed, the craft of teaching demands that we do more than talk about or endlessly theorize issues of authority and power, as I have, I fear, done in this essay. Theorizing must, in the art and craft of teaching, share time with concrete actions taken in particular material settings, that is to say, in our classrooms. The hard work of creating a classroom community ethic worthy of a recuperated "authority"—or any one of the alternatives I've mentioned here—awaits us. And on my good days (at least), I not only welcome this work but feel cautiously optimistic about its eventual success.

NOTES

[1] In a series of freewritings (or "Inksheddings," as some of us have learned to call them) held during the May 1995 Inkshed Conference, an anonymous contributor wrote provocatively of the links between authority and Western individualism. "It's another kind of deep-seated individualism," this writer remarked, to believe that we, as teachers, "own" authority in such a form that allows us to give it away. Authority resides nowhere in us as individuals. Authority is a constructed dynamic that shapes activity and language and, reciprocally, is shaped by activity and language. We need to help our students see sources of authority in situations not necessarily embodied in people but *in activities.*

[2] Particularly helpful in regard to our field's near obsession with plagiarism, and a concomitant tendency to label as plagiarism discursive acts that, in areas other than student writing, we would not find suspect at all, is Rebecca Howard's essay "Plagiarism, Authorships, and the Academic Death Penalty." Howard also wrote a book-length study of the ways in which the "author construct" has affected composition theory and pedagogy (see Howard, 1999). A provocative overview of recent obsessive concern over plagiarism appears in James Kincaid's *New Yorker* essay, "Purloined

Letters" (1997). In addition, Alice Roy and Lisa Buranen have edited an important forthcoming collection entitled *Plagiarism and its Discontents.*

[3] Given this analysis, is it any wonder that composition teachers (most often female), and composition studies (a feminized field), have had such great difficulty establishing authority?

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chapter 5

The Ethics of Plagiarism

Rebecca Moore Howard
Syracuse University

In 1841, motivated in part by a desire to promote international copyright, Charles Dickens came to the United States. He left disappointed and discouraged. *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *American Notes,* his next publications, reveal Dickens's complicated feelings about his unsuccessful attempts to gain international protection for his work. In explaining Dickens's actions and attitudes, critic Gerhard Joseph (1994) calls plagiarism "a dark variant of imitation and influence. Because it brings the bourgeois conception of individual identity into conflict with itself, plagiarism tends to be easily dismissed from our cultural consciousness and has occasioned relatively little theoretical discussion...." (p. 267).

Joseph's reading of *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *American Notes* is provocative, and I recommend it highly. His primary findings, though, are tangential to my task here—which is to interrogate the ethical bases that academic culture attributes to all forms of plagiarism. Thus my chief interest in Joseph's essay concerns his remark about plagiarism's exclusion from cultural consciousness. Bringing "the bourgeois conception of individual identity into conflict with itself," plagiarism has of necessity not been included in the theorizing that takes place in composition studies. To theorize about plagiarism would be to expose that identity conflict, and to expose that identity conflict would be to upset the notion that the author is a stable, autonomous agent. By maintaining the stable, autonomous agency of the author, the notion of plagiarism protects a status quo in which student writers are deemed the lesser of, and are barred from full access to, the literary texts that they are assigned to read.

Plagiarism is barred from cultural discussion because it is incapable of bearing its cultural burden. To examine plagiarism and its role in society would be to acknowledge it as an unstable field incapable of bearing any burden at all. The only way in which it can continue to function as a protector of the literary status quo, therefore, is for the culture to agree that plagiarism is what Cicero would call a "mean" case, unsavory and inappropriate for discussion.

Taking up that mean case, I wish to look at the ethical foundations that we attribute to plagiarism. In reference to our students, composition publications commonly describe the plagiarist as either an unethical or pre-ethical agent. For our discipline to sustain this assertion requires that we treat "plagiarism" as a unified subset of the category "academic dishonesty," notwithstanding that the term "plagiarism" encompasses very different textual practices: the purchase of term papers and the appropriation of phrases from a source text. If we begin to differentiate among these subsets of plagiarism, we begin to realize that at least one of the practices described as plagiarism may have no ethical basis at all and that it therefore cannot belong to the larger category of academic dishonesty. We must then consider whether the ethics of plagiarism are a matter of the *teacher's* ethics, not the student's.

I would destabilize the supposedly unitary category of plagiarism by calling attention to patchwriting—"[c]opying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one-for-one synonym-substitutes" (Howard, 1993, p. 233). Often, this practice is called "unintentional plagiarism." By calling it plagiarism, we describe it as a subset of academic dishonesty and hence attribute a lack of ethics to it. But by calling it unintentional, we assert that it is committed by a writer who is ignorant of academic ethics. It is unintentionally unethical.

After only two paragraphs of discussion, a great fissure appears in the supposedly unitary category of plagiarism. It is not just that purchasing term papers and patchwriting are entirely different activities; it is also that our classification of patchwriting in the category of academic dishonesty compels us to sustain a ridiculous paradox. How can ethics be unintentional? Is not conscious agency an essential component of our shared notion of *ethics?*

Category: academic dishonesty, defined in ethical terms. Subsets: cheating and plagiarism. Subsets of the category of plagiarism: submitting papers written by others, and patchwriting. Differentiation between these two subsets: one is intentional, the other unintentional. But *because they are both classified under "academic dishonesty,"* they are both defined as unethical activities. An interesting question then becomes whether both types of "plagiarism" are punished equally (the logic being that ignorance of the law is no excuse), or whether lesser punishments are recommended for patchwriting.

To construct an ethical category suggests that intentions are part of the mix. Is not intentionality a necessary component of ethics? Yet—again paradoxically—those who would punish both sorts of plagiarism equally assert that the writer's intentions are *not* a component of the definition and adjudication of plagiarism. Hence—and now here's a paradox profoundly difficult to swallow—we base judgments about plagiarism solely on features of texts. But in academic deliberations about plagiarism, we punish the writer, not the text. Teacher Hildegarde Bender (1994) writes to the *Council Chronicle* to say that she tells her high-school students,

> "If you give me plagiarism, I will give you an F." I am not concerned with the idea of "intent to deceive" since my experience tells me two things: the world doesn't care about intent; and since I give very thorough instruction regarding plagiarism prior to expository writing, if it occurs, there *is* intent to deceive. (p. 11)

The alternative to the "harsh" approach taken by Bender is a more "lenient" one that offers differentiated punishments for the differentiated subsets of plagiarism. In this approach, intentional plagiarism receives much stiffer punishments than the unintentional kind. Alice Drum (1986) and Dorothy Wells (1993) are two among the many composition scholars who lean toward this response to patchwriting. So is Susan McLeod, but in her 1992 account, the categories begin to break down, because she challenges the ethical basis of the subsets of plagiarism. Differentiating "hard-core cheaters" from inadvertent plagiarists, she declares, "Unintentional plagiarism is not cheating at all, but a simple lack of understanding about the conventions of documentation." McLeod expands on this thought: "We should view this inadvertent plagiarism as a pedagogical rather than as a legal and moral issue, working with both teacher and student to ensure learning of a different sort—about documentation practices" (p. 11). By using the label "plagiarism," McLeod does not fully resolve the contradiction, for "plagiarism" belongs to the ethically defined category of academic dishonesty. But by challenging the ethical basis of patchwriting (her "unintentional plagiarism"), she opens the door to that which would profoundly affect composition pedagogy and indeed, all textual pedagogy.

Asserting its ethical basis and categorizing it as plagiarism likens patchwriting to the purchase of term papers. Furthermore, plagiarism's place in the larger category of academic dishonesty means that patchwriting is also likened to cheating on examinations. Undertaking to encourage academic honesty, Richard A. Fass (1986), for example, includes plagiarism within his purview—not only purchased term papers, one of the "blatant forms of cheating" that "do not require description or elaboration," but also writing tutors' assistance in the "style and structure of a paper" (pp. 33–34).

This is, in fact, a remarkable assertion, but one that goes unchallenged in academic culture. Cheating on exams, purchasing term papers, appropriating phrases from a source text, and getting a tutor's help in structuring a paper are all the same; they are all academic *dis*honesty. They are all ethical transgressions, whether from ignorance or malice. Irene Clark (1988) may argue, "Without excessive concern about plagiarism, writing center tutors would be able to experiment with imitation as a pedagogical method—showing students how to develop examples, write introductions, and vary sentence structure" (p. 10). But everyone reading her article participates in the academic culture that would classify this suggestion as textual "liberalism," a "soft" approach to the "hard" ethical issue of authorial morality. In fact, the differentiations made between the practices of cheating on exams, purchasing term papers, tutoring, and patchwriting are usually differentiations of appropriate *punishments.* In other words, all these practices are unethical; the only question is *how* unethical. Tutoring has, thankfully, come to be viewed in more interactive terms within the discipline of composition studies; but patchwriting has not.

The patchwriting of which I speak is familiar to us all. We see it from our students regularly, and we do it ourselves, whenever we're writing about sources that we're having difficulty understanding. We appropriate phrases and whole sentences from the source. Those of us who are experienced writers punch these words and sentences around a bit, so that they don't sound quite the same once we're done with them; but we nevertheless engage in appropriation. And it is a necessary appropriation, because of our unfamiliarity with the words and/or ideas of the original. In her *Bedford Handbook for Writers,* Diana Hacker (1994, p. 478) gives an example:

> **Original version**
> If the existence of a signing ape was unsettling for linguists, it was also startling news for animal behaviorists.
> —Davis, *Eloquent Animals,* p. 26
>
> **Unacceptable borrowing of wording**
> The existence of a signing ape unsettled linguists and startled animal behaviorists (Davis 26).

As Hacker's example illustrates, the issue is not one of citation, for the "unacceptable" version cites the Davis source. The issue is appropriation. Yet the standard pedagogy recommended for this "inadvertent" plagiarism is instruction in citation, not instruction in how to comprehend difficult source material.

Hacker, replicating our culture's classification of patchwriting, discusses it under the heading "Do Not Plagiarize" (1994, pp. 477–479). Hence the "unacceptable borrowing" is partner to term-paper purchase and crib notes on an exam. Not understanding a source text thus classifies the writer as an academic criminal.

Having spent several years reading and mulling over the available commentary on plagiarism, I have begun to wonder whether the theoretical silence on plagiarism, the failure to interrogate the inherited cultural logistics that I have just outlined, is a simple omission, an agenda that composition studies has not yet gotten around to; or whether it is an agenda that composition studies *cannot* get around to. I am referring to the controversial assertion that the function of composition instruction is to ensure that the social status that students bring to college is the social status they depart with.

This gatekeeping function of composition instruction would have its genesis in late 19th-century culture. Composition instruction, as it emerged in American universities, was a way of taming the heterogeneous literacies of an expanding college population. The late 19th century was a time of rapidly increasing mass literacy. Today, we regard that social change as a positive one, but a century ago it was not universally welcomed. Writers in particular had mixed reactions to their potentially expanded readership.[1] Presumably, that expanded readership would mean more visibility and more profits for writers, yet many writers perceived mass literacy as a threat. Mass literacy did not, it turned out, mean that a whole new reading public embraced the texts valued by the traditionally educated class; rather, it meant that a whole new type of literature gained ascendancy—the "little reading" that Thoreau deplored, a literature penned by the "scribbling women" whom Hawthorne abhorred.

It may be no coincidence that at the same time that composition instruction was entering the American college curriculum and at the same time that authors were worrying about the masses' indifference to their esoteric texts, these same authors were asserting that original writing demonstrated the good character of the writer, whereas derivative writing was the hallmark of the debased reading that the masses appreciated. Joseph (1994) notes, "As the career of Coleridge among others makes clear, authorial plagiarism became a significant moral and aesthetic issue in the nineteenth century precisely because of the high premium put upon the ideals of 'originality' and 'invention' at the expense of classical 'imitation'" (p. 266). What Joseph does not offer is an explanation for why originality and invention became so important. Intellectual historians such as John Carey (1992) do, however, offer that explanation: The intelligentsia moved to protect their textual power by differentiating a "high" and "low" literature and literacy. Crucial to differentiating the high literature was establishing its composition by an originary, autonomous author.

Nineteenth-century writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson (1950) added another crucial component: If a solitary author composed original literature, that method of composition indicated the author's high virtue. Thus it was not only the literature of the traditionally educated that was "high," it was also the morality of the author that was high. And thus the intellectual class system demarcated by high and low literature becomes a moral class system as well. Emerson states the equation succinctly; original writing comes from inspiration but is possible only for the virtuous writer:

> A man's power to connect his thought with its proper symbol, and so to utter it, depends on the simplicity of his character, that is, upon his love of truth and his desire to communicate it without loss. (p. 17)

Enter, at just about the same time, composition studies, a new realm of teaching intended to bring intellectual orthodoxy to the newly educated masses. In *Textual Carnivals* (1991), Susan Miller makes a case for composition's role in the distinction between high and low literacy: high literature is the purview of the literature faculty in an English department, and low literature—that is, student writing—the purview of the composition faculty. Grouping the two (literature and composition) together in one department (English) reinforces the distinction. Composition is thus complicit in the exclusion of the masses (the students of composition) from participation in "high" literacy; these students, their composition teachers, and the insidious Freshman Composition are forever the Other of English departments. Composition instruction—its students, teachers, and subject matter—"offers the culture at large an emblem for the repugnant 'body' of writing by individuals. It is an institutionalized way of discriminating between those who will or will not occupy a space for contributing to (and for changing) powerful discourse traditions well outside canonical ideals" (Miller, 1991, p. 6). Writing four years after the publication of *Textual Carnivals*, Miller declares, "It is, of course, old news by now that nations designed and centralized literature and composition studies to colonize populations portrayed as masses...." (1995, p. 43). Sharon Crowley (1995) finds this argument sufficiently persuasive that she advocates the abrogation of composition's "service ethic."[2] According to this logic, the original and continuing rationale for composition studies is the maintenance of social hierarchy. The only escape is to eschew the service course entirely; it cannot be rehabilitated for an egalitarian agenda.

HIERARCHICAL CONCEPTION OF TEXTUAL ETHICS

The colonizing properties of composition instruction may be "old news," but not to everyone. The entire discipline of composition studies has yet to embrace Miller's assertions, though her argument has influential adherents, such as Sharon Crowley. We should note, though, that outside composition studies, commentators such as John Carey are developing theories of 19th-century American culture that reinforce Miller's interpretations.

The territory outlined by Miller (1991, 1995) and Carey (1992) provides a plausible genealogical framework for understanding how patchwriting has been and continues to be defined as an ethical issue, likened to cheating on exams and buying term papers. By unifying disparate textual practices under a single heading called "plagiarism" and by locating this "plagiarism" category under the larger heading called "academic honesty," we establish an ethical basis for highly disparate textual practices. By establishing an ethical basis for the textual strategy called "patchwriting," the notion of plagiarism operates as an instrument of exclusion, a means of insuring that the Great Unwashed (a term that, not surprisingly, originates in the 19th century),[3] whom composition instruction allegedly empowers, will in fact leave college in the same sociointellectual position in which they entered—all in the name not of intellectual class, but of personal morality.

To assert plagiarism as a moral issue is to assert that it is a matter of free choice. The plagiarist is either unethical or pre-ethical: the writer either understands the ethical issues and chooses to violate them, or he or she does not yet know the ethical issues.

The anthropological perspective on personal choice helps illuminate the cultural logistics at work here. From an anthropologist's point of view,

> Choice is constrained but not fully determined by the system of morality in which the choice is made.... [I]f the social structure is conceived as consisting of that aspect of the moral order that we term the jural system, it not only constrains human behavior, it also delineates a field of opportunity for choice. This field may be termed the "opportunity structure." The social structure controls choices by public disincentives, or punishments. The opportunity structure channels choices by rewards. But choices in the opportunity structure are still somewhat constrained by that aspect of the moral order we refer to as "ethics." There is also a contrastructure, which consists of behaviors which are forbidden by the jural order but which nevertheless may be chosen by certain members of the society. Thus, the jural order not only defines what choices are acceptable, but also what choices are not acceptable. (Appell, 1988, p. 34)

Interpreting patchwriting as plagiarism and hence as criminal would, in this framework, locate it in the social structure or jural order. Patchwriting would not be a positive choice that the writer makes in order to gain rewards but a forbidden behavior that is subject to punishment.

Patchwriting is, indeed, subject to punishment, yet it is a strategy to which writers may turn for *positive* reasons. Writers often patchwrite as a way of understanding unfamiliar material, as a way of appropriating a new vocabulary—as a way, in other words, of entering a new discourse community.

Patchwriting is a signal that the writer doesn't fully understand the source; but it is also, in most of the cases that I have observed, a signal that the writer is striving to understand. Remarkably, though, with the exception of commentators like Glynda Hull and Mike Rose (1989), few composition theorists have described patchwriting as part of the opportunity structure; instead, they have consigned it to the jural order. To categorize patchwriting as plagiarism, hence as academic dishonesty, hence as an ethical transgression, is to outlaw learning, to preserve the intellectual status quo rather than to bring new members into the fold. Is this the motivation of the individuals who teach composition? Hardly. But it is, according to Susan Miller (1991), the task that those individuals are tacitly given, by virtue of their being composition instructors. And, according to Sharon Crowley (1995), it is a task they cannot escape as long as they are teaching "service" composition. The criminalization of patchwriting is one way in which composition instruction that would appear to empower its students actually prevents their learning, for it would deprive them of a key strategy for learning the language of and gaining entry into an academic discipline. Not only to criminalize patchwriting but to "humanely" respond to it not with punishment but with instruction in citation only furthers that cause, for it deprives students of the instruction they actually need: instruction in how to understand unfamiliar source texts.

INTERACTIVE CONCEPTION OF TEXTUAL ETHICS

It is remarkably easy to make a case for patchwriting as a *sign* of textual ethics, rather than an *absence* of them—and such cases have been made by composition theorists whose cause has notably not been taken up in the discipline. When patchwriting is interpreted as part of the positive opportunity structure rather than the negative jural order, one can readily say that students patchwrite out of respect for a discourse community in which they are themselves inexpert, but which they are attempting to enter. Ann M. Penrose and Cheryl Geisler (1994) suggest that students who are operating in a "traditional information-transfer model in which texts are definitive and unassailable" are unlikely to want to tamper with the language of a source text, for fear of distorting the truth that those words convey (p. 507). Students' patchwriting—their lifting phrases from that text—is therefore a gesture of respect for it. Glynda Hull and Mike Rose (1989) interpret students' patchwriting in the same spirit, but through a slightly different lens: For them, patchwriting is not so much a fear of disturbing a linguistically encoded truth as it is an attempt to appropriate new ways of expressing oneself. They describe Tanya, one of their students, as taking a "patchwork approach" to summary as a means of trying on the language of the source text (p. 147). Nor do Hull and Rose characterize this textual strategy as that of an inexpert learner; they remind us that, although we teachers have mastered the academic discourse rules of attribution, we often do the same. The reading/writing circle, in their account, involves a process of linguistic appropriation. Thinking in terms of what sort of pedagogy would be appropriate to such an interpretation of patchwriting, Hull and Rose offer an agenda that would seem to defy the textual values traditionally inscribed in composition pedagogy: they would *encourage* patchwriting. It may not be a desirable final stage for one's academic writing, but it is a valuable and hence laudatory transitional stage. "After all," Irene Clark (1988) asks, "where did we acquire our own style in the first place? Surely none of us are under the impression that we actually 'own' a particular phrase in the sense that we were the ones who had originated it" (p. 9).

Introducing William B. Stanley's book, *Curriculum for Utopia*, Henry A. Giroux and Peter L. McLaren (1992) declare, "The enemy of ethics is not only a debased relativism, but also the refusal of an ethical discourse to address how it might be complicit with forms of injustice and human suffering" (pp. xii–xiii). Stanley's project, they say, makes the central assertion that before teachers can adopt an ethical stance, they must "develop basic human interests and interpretive competence" (p. xiv).

The issues raised by Giroux and McLaren (1992) could not more accurately describe the ethics of plagiarism as it exists in composition studies. The textual phenomenon of patchwriting does, indeed, point to an ethical domain: the ethics of the teacher. Teaching students to use patchwriting productively and then to move beyond it requires a pedagogy far more sophisticated than instruction in the mere mechanics of citation conventions. It requires teachers to accept ethical responsibility for their students' learning, instead of settling for the empty ceremony of teaching citation conventions. It also requires of them a sophisticated sense of ethics that makes fine distinctions among human motivations, instead of settling for catch-all categories like "plagiarism." And it requires that they "develop basic human interests and interpretive competence," which Giroux and McLaren say are precedent to adopting an ethical stance. We must, in other words, actually enact the facilitative, empowering pedagogy that we declare ourselves engaged in, rather than replicating the hierarchical and exclusionary agenda that our cultural history has given us. Plagiarism is, indeed, an issue of ethics. In cases of cribbed exams and purchased term papers, it is an issue of students' ethics. But in cases of patchwriting, it is an issue of teachers' ethics, an issue of whether we will or will not engage in pedagogy consonant with our declared goals.

NOTES

[1] Martha Woodmansee's works (especially *The Author, Art, and the Market* [1994]) detail German writers' reactions but also speak to the general literacy quandary in which the 19th-century West was embroiled. See, for example, Chapter 6, "The Uses of Kant in England."

[2] Some institutions have maintained the service ethic but have separated composition and literature into independent academic departments (see, for example, Little & Rose, 1994). Whether this separation would change the dynamic that Miller and Crowley assert for literature and composition is quite another question; perhaps the separation does not disturb that dynamic but only makes it less visible.

[3] Peter Stallybrass and Allon White (1986) explain that the expression "the Great Unwashed" emerged in the 1830s in England. Fear of contamination ran rife, resulting in a fear of touching. "'Contagion' and 'contamination' became the tropes through which city life was apprehended," and the fear of contamination extended beyond hygiene to a fear of the "spiritually inferior" (pp. 135–136).

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chapter 6

An Ethics of Difference

Myrna Harrienger
Texas Tech University

Nan Uber-Kellogg
Purdue University

We begin with a narrative about studying for comprehensive doctoral exams because it foreshadows a teaching experience during the ensuing school year. Not surprisingly, that teaching situation was precipitated by a similar difficulty, which this narrative tells, namely, how to relate in a way that was both ethical and effective. But we're getting ahead of the story. Suffice it to say here that, from the strategy used to respond to practice exam questions, Nan develops a reader response heuristic for first-year composition teachers and students. The heuristic is a concrete illustration of several Bakhtinian concepts: the notion of dialogic, an ethics based on a preference for the difference of the other, and the importance of genre and roles in writing.[1]

I GET BY WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS: COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND BAKHTINIAN ETHICS

[Nan] "Would you like to study for the comprehensive exams together?" my friend and classmate, Miriam Olver, asked me shortly before summer vacation began.

"Yes, if we can study by mail. I'll be away."

"That will work. We can mail our practice answers to each other, and send back written feedback."

"Feedback. Right" (M. Olver, personal communication, May 1, 1994).[2]

With this general plan in place, we confidently went our separate ways. When Miriam's first answer arrived, though, my confidence turned to concern. The answer was classic Miriam—it began by addressing the question at hand (something along the lines of "Discuss the relationship between style and invention in medieval and Renaissance rhetoric in 1,500 words"), but soon ventured into questions she had about invention, and from there went into the role of audience in invention (M. Olver, personal communication, May 28, 1994). Her speculations were fascinating, but they pulled her far afield of the question. When she did return to the subject matter, she talked about things that the question didn't ask her to cover. "Good grief!" I thought. "If she writes an answer like this on the exam, she's not going to pass."

Now telling someone they're not answering the question at hand may seem like a straightforward task, but I couldn't bring myself to do it, not without her express permission—invitation even—to do so. How did I know that Miriam didn't have very good reasons for writing the way she had? Perhaps it helped her integrate the material to link it to her thoughts about other matters. I also was worried that I might hurt her feelings. All of these hesitations on my part might be chalked up to an overly sensitive personality, but Myrna saw something more to the situation.

[Myrna] As Nan described her dilemma, I smiled and thought, "So much like her." One thing I especially like about Nan is this accepting attitude. A person bent on letting others be, she is very good at encouraging their efforts. When we talk, for example, she easily picks up on exactly what I feel strongly about, or find difficult. Because of this approach, Nan could readily act as witness to Miriam's efforts. However, being loathe to express overt criticism, she would find it difficult (at best) to act as a judge, focusing on shortcomings.

It is not that Nan fails to notice or to deal with differences or problems. Difference, after all, is what she privileges in relationships and interactions. Because this is so, Nan refuses to ignore or manipulate another's view. Rather, in what might be called the dialogic[3] approach, her search for ways to proceed begins by trying to understand the other's perspective on the project at hand—how, for example, Miriam stands relative to their rhetorical situation and how she perceives her efforts to complete the task. For Nan, the right way for them to proceed was for the two of them to reinterpret/clarify the rhetorical situation and in particular their problem with responding.

At the time Nan and Miriam were preparing for exams, I was working on trying to explain how Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) theory of discourse, especially his notions of dialogic and genre,[4] supplies the theoretical ground for a postmodern notion of ethics, one for whom discourse is the primary site/form of ethical action.

A Bakhtinian ethics consonant with construction of meaning through difference in discourse privileges openness to the difference of the other as that other is "enroled" in discourse. It does not rely upon a system of principles, nor upon resolution of conflict. Neither does it require an equalizing of power in relationships in order for fair negotiation to take place. Rather, it promotes the co-creation of interpretations of text (including the text of all human activities), and insists that each interpretation is a nonrepeatable event.

While I was making connections between Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) theory of discourse and ethics, I knew the next hurdle would be, for me at least, an even greater challenge: how to connect this theoretical grounding with the teaching of writing, an important connection, given the field's priority for instruction. Bakhtin's ethics are difficult to operationalize because they are not systematic. How could dialogic and genre be related concretely to concrete actions, in a way that's significant enough? Theory is not often related to pedagogy in ways that are worthwhile. Knowing Nan's predisposition to act dialogically, I followed her dilemma with interest, in hopes that she might provide clues as to how to take concrete action.

YOU'RE TELLIN' ME HOW IT'S GONNA BE: ENROLED RESPONSES

[Nan] I could have just asked Miriam what kind of feedback she wanted; doing so would have worked within my preferred mode of interacting. Yet I felt so uncomfortable over the prospect that she might say "Be tough" and equate me with that toughness, that I looked for another way to proceed. I wanted something that would allow us to distance ourselves from the feedback I might give or that would distinguish between myself and the feedback.

I recalled the notion of writer and reader roles that Lauer employs in her composition pedagogy. "A role," Lauer, Montague, Lunsford, and Emig write, "is another name for the characteristic social behavior of an individual" (1991, p. 33). The reader roles "guide [the audience] through the text and...help the writer make choices"(p. 33).[5] For example, if a student is writing to members of her old basketball team, she might choose the role of "former team member" for herself, and "current team member" for her readers. The roles set up the relationship between the writer and readers, and establish appropriate and irrelevant or inappropriate subject matter. Once a writer selects the roles, she then invokes them in the text through her choice of examples, appeals, and diction.

I thought I would find it easier to respond to Miriam if I were using a role she assigned me. There were actually many roles that we could reasonably use in this situation. Each role could be associated with a certain kind of feedback, suitable to the relationship it entailed between writer and reader. If I offered Miriam a variety of writer roles, she could choose the one (or ones) that she wanted me to use, and I could respond accordingly, knowing it was what she wanted. In other words, the role would become the focus of my response. An encourager role, for instance, would focus on making comments that offered support by pointing out things that the writer had done well. On the other hand, a gatekeeper role would have the task of maintaining institutional standards and judging writing according to those standards. A logician role would be alert to strengths and flaws in lines of reasoning; a processor role would attend to the process the writer was using to make her way through the material. Once again, Myrna helped me to understand the theoretical grounding of this idea.

[Myrna] First of all, in postmodern thought generally, and in Bakhtinian thought more particularly, the construction of meaning and the enactment of ethics are understood to take place through language. Therefore, Bakhtin (1986) explains meaning making in terms of the operations of language. He describes enrolement through discourse using the notions of genre and role. Genres are typical modes of expression whose conventional nature sets boundaries for meaning. They inscribe and disclose those spheres of activity that comprise human activity. The essential feature of genre is the relationship between self and other or addresser and addressee; this relationship, which can be characterized as a set of interrelated roles, determines genre distinctions. Genres mark out the parameters of discursive locations by specifying protocols for and features of those roles with which they are identified. The roles that Nan suggested using were markers of distinct response genres.

[Nan] I wrote to Miriam, suggesting that we use the response roles, and offering her the encourager, processor, gatekeeper, logician, and one other that seemed particularly suited to her, the missioner. A missioner is concerned with the writer's sense of life mission, and addresses ideas in the text that tie to the writer's broader purposes. Miriam wrote back, invoking roles for herself in relationship to the response roles. Here are her replies:

> I have several responses and corresponding choices:
>
> **Me—My Self.** My gut-level response is to go for encourager first because, working alone, I'm having a confidence battle over whether I can really jump through this hoop successfully. Processor...might be a good second choice.
>
> **Visionary Me.** The idea of missioner, as you've defined it, is really appealing, and is more in line with the way I want to think about my studies and go on developing my own interpretations and understandings.

> **Me with Pre-lim Jitters.** Probably the obvious choices here are gatekeeper and logician. Although the others are much more interesting, these are what I especially need this summer. In terms of logician, I am concerned about my focus in writing because that is something that has come up in several papers. I get to writing and following a train of thought and the visionary in me works through to some new understanding and I think I forget to go back and revise earlier writing to reflect also the new perceptions. So I'm trying to spend a little extra time being sure I've kept the same focus throughout. That is an important area in which I need your input. (personal communication, June 27, 1994)

Miriam used the roles to tell me specifically the help she needed from me. Knowing that she thought she was having a problem the logician could help her with, I could readily adopt the role because it was helping her—and she was telling that it was so. We had been using roles to respond to one another thus far anyway; making the roles explicit helped us articulate the ways we could be most helpful to one another.

[Myrna] Nan and Miriam were involved in fostering one another's agency. We do, after all, endow one another with humanity not physically, but discursively: human be-ing is disclosed in discourse. A significant element of dialogic co-creating is the co-authoring of the self. In the intense, intimate relationship of dialogic, each participant is profoundly active, authoring and being authored. Socialized in the space of discourse, we come to know ourselves through the other in human relationship constituted in dialogic. Moreover, because every human interaction has the potential to (re)constitute the self of the other, every search for meaning, however insignificant, denies or affirms the self and the personhood of the other. Given its unfinalizability, the self, in fact, requires such continuous (re)constitution. This need for reconstitution, and the potential of each discursive exchange to foster or impede that reconstruction, forms the basis for a Bakhtinian ethics based on preference for the other. Nan's attention to Miriam's writing in a manner that confirmed Miriam's goals exemplified Bakhtinian ethics.

[Nan] In her letter, Miriam told me the kind of a response she needed; she enroled me in a position that was useful to her.[6] Miriam was trying to bring into action a certain kind of logical thinking, and to set aside the visionary pulls for the time being and simply address the question she was being given. For my part, because I was operating from a preference for her perceptions and needs rather than my own, I willingly allowed her to enrole me in a more judgmental stance than I would otherwise have occupied. When I focused my attention on looking for the presence and absence of suitably logical utterances, and responded in kind, I was helping Miriam create them by listening for and responding to such utterances. In that way, I assisted Miriam while she authored herself as someone who could think

and write within the logical guidelines for the exam. If I had not listened for her efforts to construct herself in this way, I would have made it more difficult for her to do so, since she would not have had an active listener. On the other hand, if I had unilaterally decided that some sort of logician or gatekeeper response on my part was in order, I would have also hindered her efforts—and my desire to act ethically—in a subtle but important way. I really wouldn't have known what *she* was trying to do or get to. She might have told me after the fact that the feedback was just what she was looking for. However, without having elicited her goals and concerns, I would have ignored the opportunity to work cooperatively. Myrna explains further how our situation illustrates the dialogic relationship.

[Myrna] In Bakhtinian (1981, 1986) terms, the dialogic relationship is characterized by a stance that privileges the other as an expressive subject and producer of text, as well as voice enroled in and made literate by being listened to. The necessary condition for such a relationship is a fundamental option for the other, including the other of one's self. To the degree that the relationship is dialogic, this being-toward-the-other functions as a dynamic attitude of preference. As such, it constitutes a condition of possibility for (re)interpretation and insight. Nan, for example, hoped the situation would allow for Miriam to gain insight into acceptable answers to exam questions.

Philosopher Kenneth Burke (1966) identifies just such an attitude as an incipient action, as already a response of regard to the alterity of the other. The commitment to witness is itself already a witnessing; openness to change is itself change. This dynamic predisposing stance creates an ethical space that is also an action, and bridges the radical distance between self and other. It is ethical because it is directed to the good of the other. However, even though dialogic is the basis of human experience, of the experience of being human, we are not impelled to search for understanding; the preference for dialogic doesn't have to develop into a habit. Therefore, the decision to take on an attitude of preference for the other is an ethical one, since ethical decisions always involve choice.

NOT SECOND-GUESSING FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS: STUDENT-DIRECTED FEEDBACK

[Myrna] Nan had developed a response strategy that enacted an ethics of difference through en-rolement. The strategy worked in this situation—she provided feedback that Miriam was able to use, and both of them passed their exams. I could see how this plan of action worked for two thoughtful graduate students versed in postmodern theories of discourse. What goals could it help accomplish in a first-year composition class?

[Nan] I tried the response roles with first-year students partway through the next fall semester. I modified some of the roles and expanded the explanations, mapping out the pedagogical task associated with each role, followed by the type of interaction needed to carry out the task. They became:

Role	**Task**	**Activity**
gatekeeper	uphold the university's standards for written discourse	lets student know where and how she meets/fails to meet universitys competency standards
logician	promote the use of consistent logic	points out sound and flawed reasoning in the text
encourager	help student remain confident	points out what student is doing well
processor	help student identify features of her writing process	comments on ways student has approached the writing project
identifier	assist student in recognizing recurring themes in her work	makes connections between themes in current project and earlier ones
conversant	engage in conversation with student about her ideas	responds to the subject matter of the students writing

Having devised the roles, I provided students with these brief descriptions, and asked each of them to select two roles for me to use when responding to the first draft of their persuasive texts. I also asked them to tell me why they selected the two roles they did. I wanted to know their reasons—as with Miriam, their reasons were crucial to my being able to support them in their educational efforts. I also thought that they would learn more about how roles operate if they had two enroled responses to compare. At first they seemed baffled, even bemused, by this assignment requiring them to tell me how to respond. But they dutifully wrote down their choices.[7]

What happened? I will use a student I will call Kevin as an example. Kevin was the class clown. He liked to sit in the back of the room with his buddies and get everyone giggling. At the beginning of the semester, my guess about him was that he was the youngest child who got away with everything, and wasn't too serious about being in school. Apart from separating him from his pals and calling on him regularly, I wasn't sure how to keep him in line, let alone spark his interest in learning.

Because each of the response roles implied an attitude toward education, Kevin had to consider, at least minimally, his ideas about education. Was education about jumping through hoops? Acquiring skills that would gain him access to a lucrative career? Or did it entail learning how to learn? To be a citizen of the world? I was very curious to see which roles he chose.

Kevin's first role choice for the third writing project—a persuasive piece written to members of a group he belonged to—was gatekeeper. He wanted to know if his writing was good enough to meet the university standards. I thought, "Ah ha! Pretty predictable. He wants to know if he is passing, as do most of his classmates. I bet he just wants to get through school." I wrote the following response:

> *Gatekeeper:* This writing course, as part of a university education, promotes the selection of an important topic, taking a position, and making a sustained, careful argument in support of that stance. You have done all three of these things at a level that is acceptable for first-year college work. However, there are other aspects of the piece that do not yet meet university requirements. You have far too many grammatical errors, you use too many short sentences that could be combined effectively. Your vocabulary is at a 10th grade level and needs building.

These were the sort of comments I would have made anyway, although probably not so bluntly, since it seemed to be part of my obligation as his writing teacher. However, having Kevin request these comments shifted the dynamics in an important way. Kevin's choice made him the initiator of the exchange, and a more active participant in his education.

Kevin's second choice surprised me. He asked me to use the identifier role because he was curious to know whether there were recurring themes in his work; he didn't see any and he wondered if I did. From his outward behavior in the class, I wouldn't have guessed that he had an interest in themes in his work. I recognized the possibility that he was just picking identifier for a lark, and didn't really care, but I went ahead and gave a serious answer:

> *Identifier:* You seem to be making efforts to understand your experiences of family closeness. You have been exploring ways that your family's strong bonds appear to be different from larger cultural trends away from family ties. In your first paper you looked at what actions have helped your extended family stay close despite moves to far-away towns; in your second paper you wrote about how you and your brother became best friends when that's unusual; in this paper you promote a change in university policy that could help students whose families are far away.

I had noticed the themes in his work, but without his request, I would not have made the effort to pass this observation along to him; I would have assumed that he was not interested, or that he needed to focus on technical matters before getting to these "higher order" concerns.

As with Miriam, my work with Kevin put me in a position to help him enact the roles that he selected, working as a partner/facilitator in his self authoring. From an ethical standpoint, this cooperative relationship was consonant with an ethics of difference. From a pedagogical standpoint, the response role strategy worked with first-year students. They understood the roles and used them to give me information about their educational goals.

It seemed to me that the strategy, taken this far, helped me but not them to understand and use cooperative authoring. Used in this way, without further discussion, the response role strategy did not necessarily prepare students to develop an awareness of the continuous enroleings they were subject to, nor teach them how to take advantage of the potential for powerful self-authoring that the strategy—and other opportunities to write—offered. I wasn't sure how to use the strategy to accomplish these ends, but the problem was one I encountered with the rest of my teaching as well.

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE THE CLASSROOM: USING THE RESPONSE ROLES TO TEACH AWARENESS OF DISCURSIVE OPERATIONS OF POWER

[Nan] My training in critical pedagogy and readings in identity politics helped me to name some of the positions students occupy, and to guess at some of their values and concerns. This training also led me to be aware of the identities and values I held, and to be alert to ways my practices and preferences might differ from theirs. I thought about the power I held as the teacher, and, ascribing to student empowerment, I made pedagogical decisions that I thought would put the students at the center of the work we did.

Cultural critique helps in these particular ways, but not others. It doesn't help me get through to most students the idea that they are being manipulated to adopt certain cultural values and practices. Nor does it help me teach them how to engage in critique. I thought with a sigh about my mentor, James Berlin, who was able to use humor to point out the absurdities of consumer culture to students, offering such examples as,"Hey, yeah. I'm an individual. I wear my baseball cap backwards to prove it" (personal communication, February 7, 1993). Or a couple of my fellow graduate students who were walking encyclopedias of popular American culture and who seemed to be able to inspire new college students to look boldly where no high schooler has looked before. I have yet to master the art of engaging 18-year-olds in cultural critique.

There were plenty of cultural dynamics going on right in the classroom, and our interactions might provide us with common experience upon which we could build. We could share the experience of enroleing and being enroled through the response roles. On the next paper, I asked them to choose two reader response roles for each of their peer group members, and to write their responses to each other's drafts using the roles they were assigned (I pointed out that they didn't have to give each group member the same roles).

Pretty soon everyone in the class was taking on roles and doing a good job of it. They could make discursive distinctions between processor and gatekeeper, for instance. In fact, they were more adept at using these writer roles in their responses than they were at invoking the writer and reader roles in their papers. I sensed that something important was going on, but I couldn't articulate it. Myrna put her finger on it.

[Myrna] When working from the audience addressed/invoked model, the best you can get is a realization that a given audience affects a given *text.* But this realization is not personal in the sense that it does not acknowledge that a particular audience affects the *author.* As a result of this removal from the author, it is very difficult for a teacher to go from a text to a more generalized talk about the changes that writing creates in the author. A particular advantage of working with the teacher or classmates as readers is that they are there all the time, so they can be enroled as the student directs. The student can see/experience the enrolement she has initiated in the written feedback. But that's only half the story. The student implicitly has enroled herself when she enroles her on-hand readers because each reader role entails a writer role as well. The student makes text changes based on responses from the teacher and classmates. Kevin, for example, enroled himself as a compliant university student when he requested a gatekeeper response and later turned his efforts toward getting his conventions act together.

Once you go through the writer-enroleing-the-reader, reader-responding, writer-adjusting-the-text cycle, you have something you can sit down and talk about. You can ask students, do you understand what we are doing here? You can talk about the process. Having concrete examples and shared experience of enroleing, you can then draw larger and larger connections between enroleing in a single text and enroleing as it works in larger social contexts. You can ask students, what if all you can say about the self is what you do? What if all of life is like that? In two or three class sessions, students are making the connections. They get enrolement, the possibilities for negotiating enrolement, and the importance of having others there serving as witnesses or coauthors.

[Nan] This experiential, classroom-based approach to roles did seem to give students more ready access to the significance of identities and roles that cultural studies approaches to composition studies strive to awaken. Furthermore, the practical, immediate character of the response roles gave students the chance to develop skill in enacting roles deliberately, pushing

boundaries where it suited them. This skill, local as it was, was manageable for them, more manageable than trying to critique the use of cultural codes in, say, an advertisement for Infinity cologne.

I return to Myrna's question: What goals could the response role strategy help accomplish in a first-year writing course? The reader response roles provided for an acceptable ethical stance toward my students—one that began with attention to their perceptions. The strategy also made it possible to help promote student agency by enhancing their awareness of and skill at negotiating enrolement—another important factor of a viable ethical stance.

BAKHTINIAN ETHICS AND EDUCATION

[Myrna] Our intertwined efforts to solve practical classroom problems and to articulate a theoretical grounding for those efforts led me to the conclusion that it is possible to implement Bakhtinian discourse theory and ethics of difference in writing pedagogy. This possibility led me to reflect on implications of Bakhtinian ethics for education.

We educators, especially we educators in the discursive arts, can put into practice the grounding value of Bakhtinian ethics—the priority for difference—and make it a fundamental option for education. The goal of dialogic education is the interpretive understanding of difference, which comes about through active understanding of the difference of the other. A requisite for this active understanding is awareness. As teachers of writing we can promote awareness of the creation of knowledge and enrolement through experiential learning. We are charged with providing students with opportunities to experience difference through authoring and interpretation, since existence gains meaning in expression.

In other words, teachers of dialogic instruct in how to learn, fostering agency through experience. Dialogic education values student learning (the learning experience) as a literacy essential to itself. As such, what we as teachers are mainly interested in is not the big picture but the small picture, which amounts to focusing on the authoring students carry out as writers. It is only through close attention to the acts of authoring that students engage in that we can hope to help them become agents of their own authoring.

NOTES

[1] See Bakhtin, 1981, for a discussion of dialogic; for genre and role, see Bakhtin, 1986.

[2] Nan wishes to thank Miriam Olver for her permission to refer to our work and to quote from her correspondence.

[3] Bakhtin (1986) uses monologic and dialogic to reference centripetal and centrifugal forces as they function relative to discourse and, by extension, to human action, experience, and meaning. Although necessary for social cohesion and communication, monologic forces lean toward reification of meaning, analytic knowledge, and subsuming difference within compliance and unity. They interact to minimize multiplicity, deny difference, and exclude other voices and views. By contrast, dialogism seeks the difference of the other. It privileges fluidity, variety, and multiplicity. Dialogism describes an inherent quality of language that accounts for its heteroglossic character. Radically dynamic and contextualized, every utterance is continuously shaped by and (re)shapes its multiplanar past and future.

[4] In Bakhtin's (1986) lexicon, a genre is not limited to literary forms; his definition is much broader. A genre is a typical mode of expression. All discourse—written and spoken—employs genres.

[5] Lauer has since moved from the term "role" to "position" (personal communication, November 7, 1996).

[6] In this case, where Nan wished to act cooperatively with Miriam, the elastic, dialogic features of genre came into play. Although the constraints of genre are inescapable, the elastic boundaries of generic environments do allow for dialogic engagement, according to Bakhtin (1986). Genres are continuously, if imperceptibly, influenced by the heterogeneity of context/text and experience/expression. Experience, likewise, confirms that addresser/addressee roles need not be formulaic, nor their relationship, static. Furthermore, this fluidity demonstrates that one is never identical with an a-signed role.

[7] In addition to these "en-roled" responses in which I commented on their texts generally, I gave specific responses regarding their thesis, audience and development of material, organization, style, and conventions.

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part II

Ethics and Specialized Writing Programs

chapter 7

Composition as Service: Implications of Utilitarian, Duties, and Care Ethics

Larry Beason
University of South Alabama

Composition is still struggling to define itself as a discipline, and in so doing, we compositionists are rethinking established assumptions about the nature of writing, the relationship between theory and practice, and the role of composition in the college curriculum. This last issue is particularly important, for it clearly reminds us that any definition of composition as a discipline must consider the way in which writing courses affect—and are affected by—courses across the curriculum.

The crux is this: Is first-year composition primarily a service course meant to prepare students to write throughout their college years, or is it best seen as a course in which students write to achieve other goals? These "other goals" deal less with directly preparing a student for doing academic writing as much as they deal with other facets of individual or social life. But why would such goals supplant the traditional mission of composition courses? As I describe later, critics of the service mission tend to base their arguments on at least one of two assumptions: 1) the service mission is unrealistic, in that it is almost impossible to prepare students for the range of discourse situations and forms falling under the category of "academic writing," and 2) preparing students for academic writing is simply not as important as other goals. Specifically, critics of the service mission often argue that first-year composition should focus on writing that is more reflective or self-expressive than traditional academic papers. Other critics argue that an alternative to the service mission is to view first-year composition as an empowering mechanism allowing students to critique and reform the academic, economic, and political cultures they live in. I will use the term "service issue" to refer to this controversy over whether composition should primarily be viewed as a course intended to prepare students to write across the curriculum.[1]

My primary intent is to provide an ethical basis for asserting that the primary goal of a first-year composition program should be to prepare students to write across the curriculum. Most publications and conference presentations on the service issue lean toward the opposite position—that first-year composition should *not* primarily function as a service course (see, for example, Bergmann, 1994; Foster, 1994; Morris, 1995). However, I am not arguing in favor of a real or imagined status quo in which composition courses must serve as a transitional "boot camp" that cultivates a new elite for the "real" work of the academy. I will argue, in fact, that if composition is ethically bound to be a service course, WAC programs in particular have an ethical obligation to provide a reciprocal service to composition. An ethic of service involves an array of assumptions that, once forefronted, point to a complex relationship between composition courses and the rest of the curriculum—a relationship that requires far more interdisciplinary dialogue, research, and cooperation than is usually seen in the academy.

A secondary goal of this chapter is to demonstrate how ethics might offer insight on the various issues we face. But *whose* definition of ethics do we use? My position is that we should consider a range of ethical perspectives because 1) no one theory is held by a sufficient number of people to enable a single theory to be convincing, and 2) we can learn more about a given issue by considering alternative perspectives on ethics. To illustrate how each ethical scheme can contribute in its own way, I will separately examine three schemes in terms of their implications for the service issue. But because my overall stance reflects a more holistic view, this paper ends with a synthesis of these implications.

With this approach, I do not mean to imply that all ethical systems are equal; I am suggesting, though, that each can unearth possibilities left buried in other systems. No one has found an objective ethic that unerringly determines what is good, or at least no one has succeeded in persuading the rest of the world that such an ethic exists. In the late 18th century, philosopher Jeremy Bentham proposed a "hedonistic calculus," which has often been interpreted as a means of solving ethical dilemmas by plugging them into a set of seven criteria for ethical behavior. Even today, some ethicists use mathematical equations to define ethical behavior in an ideal sense, but most ethical systems do not attempt to determine the one and only one course of action deemed ethically pure in real situations. As Barrow (1991) argues, an ethical theory offers guidance but is not intended to "provide unambiguous prescription for conduct in the imperfect world we inhabit" (p. 12). If ethical theories are limited to providing guidance rather than ethically pure answers, we would be wise to consult various guides, various systems. In other words, we need not advocate an ethical system for it to offer insight, no more than we must vote for one political candidate simply because we are willing to admit s/he offers a worthy idea. The more candidates we listen to with an open but critical mind, the better able we are to make informed choices.

We can only stand so many campaign speeches in one election, and similarly I will not discuss the dozens of ethics systems that exist and will instead focus on the basic assumptions of three systems: utilitarianism, duties ethics, and the ethic of care.[2] Others are worth considering, but these three are based on key assumptions that allow each to contribute different constructions of ethical behavior. After examining what these three systems might suggest about the service issue, I will discuss whether they can be compatible, though my hope is that in going through each system it will be clear that they can be complementary ways of describing human behavior and responsibilities.

This chapter, then, draws on three ethics to argue in favor of a service mission, but I also hope to make it clear that my resulting definition of "service" is based on community values, proactive change, and reciprocity—not in terms of indoctrination or subservience. Before proceeding further, however, I should explain why ethics must figure into the controversy over the purpose of first-year composition.

RELEVANCE OF ETHICS

A consideration of ethics is essential because of the interconnectedness of several factors: ongoing attempts to define the composition field, the role of the service in any definition of the field, and the value of ethical perspectives for decision-making in general. Our discipline is indeed at a crucial point in striving to define itself as a respected field, and our definitions are shaped by a range of concerns, such as the benefits and penalties of service for our professional ethos. Sharon Crowley (1995), for instance, indicates that the service mission of first-year composition and its emphasis on basic literacy is a major reason why composition struggles for respect across the academy. Credibility and professional ethos are understandable concerns, but we would by definition be ethically remiss if we failed to highlight as well the ethical ramifications of maintaining, revising, or discarding composition's service mission. Ethical concerns—those dealing with moral behavior, values, and goodness—are inherent in any decision-making process about what a person "ought" to do. Nonetheless, decision making in general benefits from forthright discussions focusing on ethics. In doing so, important matters are forefronted rather than kept in the background—matters such as one's moral responsibilities to individuals and how these might clash with one's responsibility to serve the larger society.

Put another way, ethics are relevant because we should be prepared to address criticisms based on ethics. As someone involved in both first-year composition and writing across the curriculum (WAC) programs, I have found the ethical dimension is most likely to be raised by those *outside* composition. One administrator put it to me this way: It is a matter of trust. Our school, he explained, entrusted the English department with the responsibility of preparing student writers, and we are "honor bound" to fulfill this obligation. Such ethical obligations are especially important, given the proliferation of WAC programs. These programs vary, but two general observations can be made. First, they frequently depend on upper-division courses in which students are exposed to specialized, discipline-based writing. Second, WAC programs are meant to supplement first-year composition, not replace it entirely. Composition, in fact, can easily be seen as more instrumental than ever, in that it helps students gain writing skills they need before proceeding to courses involving more specialized writing. I am not saying this view is the optimal state of affairs, but it is defensible and reminds us that a successful WAC program makes the service issue more pressing by raising campus awareness of the value of writing and the interrelatedness of all teachers who help students write.

Finally, ethical codes are relevant to the service issue because ethics play a key role in writing theory and practice. Tracing the history of ethics in rhetoric/composition, James Porter (1993) argues, for instance, that ethics are inextricably tied to theories of invention. Because invention involves the construction and distribution of knowledge, the field must consider power (how knowledge is used) and ethics (the aims of that use of knowledge). Additionally, many teachers call for exposing composition students to ethical issues. Sandra Stotsky (1992), for instance, suggests we help students consider their moral responsibilities to respect the purposes of academic language and the integrity of readers (see also Friend, 1994; McCleary, 1986). If we ask student writers to consider ethics so explicitly, then we as a discipline should similarly consider ethics when faced with significant issues of our own.

In the following three sections, I consider ethical implications of utilitarian, duties, and care ethics. My final section will pull these implications together to make recommendations for approaching the role of first-year composition in the college curriculum.

UTILITARIANISM, OR WHAT OUTCOME IS BEST FOR THE MOST?

> The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals "utility" or the "greatest happiness principle" holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to

> promote happiness; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness.
> —John Stuart Mill (1969, p. 36)

Overview of Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism, popularized by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill in the 18th and 19th centuries, is the best-known branch of consequentialist ethics, which maintains that ethics primarily depend on the consequences of one's behavior rather than the values one holds. Thus, values are ethical insofar as these values produce desirable outcomes. Central to utilitarianism is this question: What outcomes are most likely to maximize well-being, or utility, for the people who could be affected by these outcomes?

One reason I discuss utilitarianism is that it has a strong common-sense appeal we need to appreciate, especially in a democratic society. As Jonathan Riley (1990) argues, both democracy and utilitarianism call for an equal distribution of goods, rights, and well-being. Still, some ethicists, most notably Bernard Williams, have proclaimed utilitarianism a vanishing theory, and two frequent criticisms of utilitarianism are that 1) it secures happiness for a majority—or the power holders—at the expense of the minority, and 2) it ignores the individual's rights to value people and projects that s/he is intimately connected with, regardless of whether these maximize happiness for the majority. Ethicists' ongoing discussions, however, indicate utilitarianism cannot be easily dismissed. Barrow (1991), for instance, reminds us that it is not simply concerned with specific actions and their benefit to only a *part* of a group; rather, the theory is based on "those acts that are as a matter of fact, taken together, necessary and sufficient for the happiness of the *whole* community" (emphasis added, p. 65). With regard to individuals' rights to value intimate relationships with people and personal projects, Jackson (1991) defends consequential ethics by arguing that the attention we give to people we hold dear is so characteristic of a worthwhile life that it must be included in any definition of well-being. In determining which outcomes lead to well-being for the whole community, then, a person must recognize the value people place on intimate relationships.

Procedural Equality and the Service Issue

So how does one interpret "well-being"? Utilitarians have defined it in words such as *happiness, pleasure, welfare,* and *contentment*; but modern definitions, as well as most earlier ones, stress that well-being goes beyond physical pleasures or ignorant bliss and moves toward a long-term state of being based on values that, in one way or another, reflect those of both community and individuals (see, for example, Mill, 1969; Moore & Stewart, 1994). The disagreement over how to elaborate on the core ideas of this ethic has led to many variations of utilitarianism, such as act versus rule utilitarianism. Riley's synthesis (1990) reveals basic assumptions that cut across varying definitions of well-being or the different roles allotted for moral rules. In particular, he points out that utilitarianism requires *procedural equality*, a means of determining and implementing ethical action. Procedural equality offers a systematic way of defining the ethical nature of composition based on a utilitarian perspective, for procedural equality deals not only with prerequisite tenets of utilitarianism. It also defines how a utilitarian perspective is *constructed and maintained*—the way in which a utilitarian stance is established.

Riley (1990) explains that procedural equality is comprised of four conditions:

Condition 1: strong neutrality (judgments are made *only* on the basis of what outcomes result in well-being),

Condition 2: strong anonymity (personal identities per se are ignored),

Condition 3: strong Pareto principle (judgments should positively reflect any consensus),

Condition 4: strong monotonicity (the decision-making process should respond positively to any relevant changes a person makes in his/her definition of welfare).

These conditions are predicated on there being a mechanism allowing people to 1) voice their concerns and definitions of utility, and 2) determine the outcome. With the service issue, it may not be possible for all teachers, administrators, and students to participate, but neither should the decision-making process be limited to English or composition teachers.

Condition 1: Neutrality and Service

This first condition (strong neutrality) requires that an ethical deliberation consider *only* utility information—*only* maximizing the benefits of possible outcomes for those affected. With the service issue, "those affected" conceivably include all society, but the people whom education most directly and unequivocally affects are students. In the most general terms, society also makes the decision of what is taught, but I will confine my discussion to more direct decision makers—faculty. Strong neutrality, as called for by procedural equality, is difficult to achieve for anyone. This is no less true of composition teachers; strong neutrality means disregarding factors that largely account for what and how compositionists teach, factors such as the advantages a department receives from teaching composition courses. At a department meeting at a university where I once worked, a colleague remarked that the only reason our department offered first-year composition was to supply teaching assistants to feed our graduate program; a professor at another school argued to me that first-year composition was the "bread and butter" of the department that enabled it to do the important work, which in this instance was teaching literature. Utilitarianism—perhaps more than any other ethical system—makes it clear why such justifications are ethically inadmissible: They focus on the welfare of the few. Composition courses often give English departments considerable enrollments, funding, and power; however, the first step in establishing a utilitarian perspective is to acknowledge such advantages but disregard them unless they lead to the well-being of those who are most affected (in this instance, composition students rather than composition teachers or programs).

Condition 2: Anonymity and Service

The second condition (strong anonymity) requires ethical deliberations to treat people equally, hence the anonymity. Achieving total anonymity is not the real issue; it is simply a method for seeing to it that no one person's (or subgroup's) concept of a desirable outcome is preferable to another's. Anonymity means that the perspective of a composition teacher counts no more than, say, a history or physical education teacher. Expertise is certainly not completely irrelevant in utilitarianism (Mill, 1969), but while compositionists can offer valuable arguments based on their expertise, we alone do not have the right to resolve the service issue. Indeed, our insights and reasoning—rather than our status per se as "the experts"—should be intended to convince those outside as well as inside the field, unless we assume laypeople in general should hand over *all* responsibility to experts (an assumption that would mean, among other things, allowing professional politicians to run the country without any input from the rest of society).

This limitation on the role of expertise may seem to conflict with the remark by the aforementioned administrator, who claimed the school entrusted the English department with teaching composition, which might suggest that composition teachers alone should determine how to handle this responsibility. Specialists are indeed given responsibilities, but these should not result in total acquiescence or blind trust. The core idea of Condition 2 (not necessarily weighing the specialist's opinion more heavily than the nonspecialist's) can play an important role in higher education. As Mahala and Swilky (1994) argue, the specialization of academia is an obstacle for campus-wide WAC programs because it leads to the compartmentalization of knowledge, prompting the attitude that writing instruction is the jurisdiction of the composition "compartment" of the school (p. 36). In addition, the academy's emphasis on specialization leads faculty to overprivilege the voice of the specialized expert. Faculty often become defensive and territorial when someone challenges their authority (expertise) because society has deemed the academy to be the pinnacle of specialized knowledge. Decisions in academia often come down to deferring to the insiders, specialists, and experts (for example, "Research proves..." or "I am the one who has spent two decades teaching this subject, and it is obvious that..."). Such deference occurs even though any introductory textbook on argument maintains that the appeal to authority is simply one form of evidence—one often misused.

In addition, the expertise of compositionists does not necessarily extend to cross-curricular relationships. True, composition by its nature is interdisciplinary, but that does not mean we are experts on every facet of the college structure and how first-year composition can fit into the needs of departments and students across the curriculum. We alone simply do not have comprehensive knowledge of the overall curriculum, meaning that we alone should not have the power to decide the mission of a university-required composition course.

Condition 3: Consensus and Service

This brings us then to the next condition of procedural equality: Decision-making should positively reflect any consensus. While there has been no formal "vote" on the service issue, a consensus exists not only among college teachers, but across American society as well. Composition courses are required because people believe students need composition to be successful during their college years as well as afterward—an assumption brought forth in historical accounts of composition (Berlin, 1984, 1987; Herzberg, 1991). Even the catalog descriptions of first-year composition indicate this role. For instance, the description at my school stresses that composition offers "fundamental competencies...necessary for successful matriculation."

Consensus alone, of course, does not always lead to a perfect or ethical outcome, but the utilitarian argument is that a consensus is one indispensable tool for ethical decision making because of *what* consensus reacts to (group needs) and *how* it does so (by securing as much agreement as possible among those affected by the outcome). Consensus calls for listening to multiple perspectives of informed individuals and then reacting in a way that best reflects the larger community's perspective of needs and desired outcomes.

Utilitarianism thus presupposes rich information as to 1) the definition of well-being among those affected by an outcome, and 2) the extent to which well-being is actually achieved and shared (Riley, 1990). Both Condition 3 and Condition 4 (monotonicity, described below) call for a wealth of information. That is, how can a consensus be determined and then modified based on individuals' changing assumptions about desirable results and needs? Realistically, most colleges cannot address the service issue with a discussion and voting system involving all teachers, yet there are other avenues for determining if there is a consensus and if it evolves to create new needs. Here, I believe, is a particularly valuable implication of utilitarianism. For composition courses to reflect individuals' changing values and needs, we have an ongoing ethical obligation to gather data and input on what we do in composition and on how these efforts are perceived by other faculty and by students.

Empirical research and assessment are therefore *ethical* obligations. They are not done to further just our own search for knowledge, nor just to define effective teaching (as important as these are). Empirical research and assessment are required to meet a crucial ethical duty—namely, to help us be informed enough to determine what a campus community considers valuable about composition courses.

This is not simply a call for outcomes-based assessment, pre/post experiments, or longitudinal studies. Various approaches can provide information required for an ethical decision. For instance, we need to know more about what sorts of thinking and writing go on in WAC courses and how these compare to what is done in composition courses. Since utilitarianism emphasizes the importance of understanding people's opinions, surveys can indicate what students and teachers believe to be working and not working in composition and WAC courses. For instance, a colleague and I surveyed students and WAC teachers as to how various genres and methods of teaching writing helped students learn course content as well as write in courses across the campus; the results helped us better understand what resources to highlight in first-year composition to prepare students for WAC (Beason & Darrow, 1997). This is but one way to use descriptive as well as experimental methods to gather information on which to make ethical decisions.

Additionally, other methods besides formal research can provide this information, such as the campus-wide writing committees that exist on many campuses. Perhaps more importantly, though, WAC programs should provide a forum for discussing (even determining) the mission of first-year composition. Composition specialists are the ones who tend to coordinate WAC programs and work with faculty in adapting the methods used in first-year composition (such as peer-response groups or the process approach). This model of WAC depends mostly on compositionists' supplying information to WAC teachers; yet, as noted already, we need to avoid the top-down approach that centers around the authoritative specialist—an approach the profession has moved away from in the composition classroom but probably not in WAC programs. These programs certainly require sharing our insights with noncompositionists, but WAC needs to expand in other directions to provide a forum in which WAC teachers can give meaningful input to composition programs. The benefit of using a WAC program in this way is that it offers the input of teachers brought together by a need or desire to discuss writing and use it in their classrooms. Such groups, then, have a notable investment in improving student writing and should play an important role in providing input on the service issue.

Condition 4: Change

The final condition of procedural equality implies that *ongoing* research is needed because teachers' values might evolve, as noted already. This condition raises another ramification of the utilitarian perspective: Change is natural, and people can act in accordance with a consensus, but also seek to change the consensus. This implies that composition teachers are not ethically bound to be puppets; they can, and perhaps should, be agents of change. Conceivably, some of these teachers might even seek to change the assumption that composition should primarily be a service course. But if these teachers are at the same time teaching composition as a service course, would they be hypocritical? Probably not unless they are absolutely convinced that a complete overhaul is needed immediately. As long as they find some importance in preparing students for writing across the curriculum, they should be able to support this mission even while attempting to amend it. Acknowledging the consensus therefore allows teachers to strive to change their colleagues' minds, perhaps through empirical research or theoretical arguments as to what constitutes "well-being" of students. With an ongoing forum (such as a WAC program used to determine a consensus), teachers can share insights and seek to convince faculty that there are other, perhaps better, approaches to composition or preparing students. This, then, is the utilitarian role of a composition specialist—to keep colleagues informed of the specialized knowledge and informed opinions found among the composition community. In this way, the compositionist is not simply a tool for implementing policy or discerning the community's needs; the compositionist is also a proactive member of the community who can seek change, just as any other member can.

Later, I will return to such revisionism, but for now my point is that utilitarianism, because it focuses on social needs in a context of relatedness, is conducive to dialogue—to a discussion of what is the best outcome for most students. And this discussion should be ongoing to reflect changes in people's values, changes we ourselves might instigate.

DUTIES ETHICS, OR WHAT DUTIES ARE INHERENTLY GOOD?

> An act is not right because it, being one thing, produces good results different from itself; it is right because it is itself the production of a certain state of affairs. Such production is right in itself, apart from any consequence.
>
> —W. D. Ross (1930, p. 47)

Overview of Duties Ethics

Utilitarianism has no set place for moral rules, for codes of behavior that are ethical and good in themselves rather than in terms of outcomes. Another ethic, deontology, stresses that "some actions are morally right or wrong because of what they are in themselves, apart from any good or bad consequences for people's well-being" (Moore & Stewart, 1994, p. 70). A deontologist might argue, for instance, that stealing is unethical, even when it is robbing a rich minority to help a poor majority (that is, stealing is stealing, and stealing is wrong). But just as utilitarians do not always disregard moral codes, deontologists do not entirely disregard consequences. Each system, however, grants principal ethical weight to one matter—rules or consequences. I focus on a modern deontological theory: W. D. Ross's pluralistic model of duties ethics. While there are other deontological theories, Ross's is one of the best known, has served as the bases for other deontologists, and is still respected as worthy in itself, having survived ethicists' scrutiny.

In *The Right and the Good,* Ross (1930) explains that a prima facie duty is an act we ought to do, unless it conflicts with an equal or stronger duty. The name "prima facie," Ross says, must be apologized for. It does not mean something that has only an appearance of being right; rather, a prima facie duty is obligatory in being an act of a certain kind, which reflective, mature adults would find morally reasonable (p. 20). Ross is sometimes considered an intuitivist because he relies on a range of individuals being able to agree that prima facie duties are good and ethical. The idea of such transcendent, self-evident rules may at first appear unsound, but his list (not meant to be exhaustive) is hard to fault: *keeping promises, reparation of a previous wrongful act, gratitude, justice* (distributing welfare based on merits of persons concerned), *beneficence* (helping others), *self-improvement,* and *not injuring others.*

Ross (1930) distinguishes between prima facie and actual duties. Prima facie duties are ideal moral standards, but actual duties are determined by examining respective weights of competing prima facie duties relevant to a specific circumstance. Thus, Ross acknowledges that the ideal system of prima facie duties does not reflect the complexities found in an actual dilemma, shifting his theory from a formulaic determination based on moral absolutism to a practical perspective calling for balance and a consideration of which duties have priority (Moore & Stewart, 1994). Duties theory does not accept, however, the assumption that rules are discounted just because they conflict or are impossible to follow in all situations. A value is no less important just because it is overridden at times by a need to follow another value.[3]

One ramification of this distinction between prima facie and actual duties is that I can only go so far in dealing with the service issue in terms of actual circumstances at specific sites. This is a reality the ethic of care will return us to again, but Ross's approach—more so than care ethics—suggests we might still discuss the service issue at an abstract level, assuming widely held moral tenets. Out of length considerations, my discussion concentrates on two prima facie duties: keeping promises and not injuring others. These, as I will argue, are directly relevant to composition's service mission. (The duties of self-improvement and beneficence are also relevant, but I believe the ethic of care offers a richer discussion.)

Promise-Keeping and Service

Few, if any, composition teachers *explicitly* promise to prepare students for WAC. "Giving one's word" (using words to form a promise) is not a daily act for most people, but if we think of a promise as giving grounds for people to expect a certain behavior from us, then our daily lives are saturated with promises—from promises of driving in a relatively safe manner (preferably, even obeying speed limits) to promises of treating students, colleagues, and family in ways consistent with our past interactions with them. Ross (1930) indicates as well that implicit promises can constitute a prima facie duty, such as the implicit undertaking not to tell lies in a normal conversation. Keeping an implicit promise is an ethical duty when a person's actions indicate that people can expect him/her to act in certain ways.

Let me offer an admittedly simple and self-indulgent example. Not long ago my four-year-old son, Russell, found me untangling our fishing poles; I was merely killing time. He watched, attempted to help, and said, "We go fishing now?" I replied vaguely, remarking that fishing sure is fun. Soon, I put the poles up and walked outside, where I found Russell sitting in the car, wearing his fishing clothes and waiting not too patiently for me. When I told him we were not going today, he responded, "But you made my pole ready!" I had sent a message that he reasonably interpreted as a promise because I did not directly correct his misunderstanding that we would go fishing.

Granted, an implicit promise is open to much interpretation (an alleged promiser might even deny the existence of a promise). In addition, a promise of any sort might be based on unfounded or unethical assumptions (for example, a promise to commit a crime). Should such a promise be kept? Promises might have various limitations and flaws, so they alone should not be the sole basis for deciding what is ethical. My stance as a whole is that compositionists should act not by considering one facet of ethics, but by considering various implications of ethics. In other words, the service mission might be an ethical duty, but not simply because this mission responds to an implied promise. Other ethical considerations contribute to my argument in favor of a service mission, but here I will focus on why keeping promises also supports this position.

Composition teachers make a range of implicit promises, including the promise of allowing students to engage in creative self-expression or the promise teachers make to the discipline to empower students. The strongest sort of implicit promise, however, exists when it is easily and widely assumed. As explained in the previous section, most students, teachers, and taxpayers take for granted that composition will attempt to prepare students for college-level writing. Procedural equality, as argued earlier, suggests that a consensus is best able to decide what outcome is best for the most, but duties ethics highlight another aspect of community agreement: Composition teachers are implicitly making a promise to prepare students for WAC unless they *explicitly* declare another primary goal. A composition program can be relieved of this ethical duty, but it is not simply a matter of waiting until students are enrolled and then showing them course objectives—a safe but superficial approach to deal with ethical obligations. Rather, the program should communicate its intentions to faculty across campus. In particular, writing teachers who cannot approach composition as primarily a service course have an ethical obligation to let faculty and students know what they will—and will not—attempt to do in their composition courses.

Duties ethics identify another ethical problem. As Pietroski (1993) argues, the duty of *keeping* a promise entails not just *making* a promise but actually coming through on it (pp. 494-495). Composition teachers therefore cannot keep an implicit promise unless they are actually able to prepare students for WAC. Some people might argue that, in trying to prepare students, composition teachers not only fail but actually harm students, an issue I will address in discussing this next prima facie duty.

Not Harming Others and Service

I will attempt to summarize the key arguments presented by compositionists who suggest composition might harm students by trying to prepare them to do academic writing. First, composition harms when it sends students and colleagues the message that students have truly been prepared, giving rise to false security and expectations. Several writing teachers (for example, Bergmann, 1994; Foster, 1994; Morris, 1995) reasonably argue that we are not experts in all types of academic discourse, meaning we cannot accurately teach students how to write like a biologist, economist, art historian, and so on. If academic discourse were a monolithic genre having set norms, perhaps we could, but even within one discipline there exist numerous ways of writing. We might not merely create false expectations and security; we might misinform, given our ignorance of conventions and genres with which we incorrectly believe we understand. A second way we might harm occurs if we indoctrinate students by teaching them to adhere to disciplinary conventions, thereby *limiting* rather than *broadening* their knowledge and possibilities. Some compositionists, such as those represented in Hurlbert and Blitz's *Composition and Resistance* (1991), maintain that we should encourage students to critique—rather than follow—disciplinary conventions, arguing that students need to recognize how conventions reflect power holdings and ideology. If we train students to see conventions as done and settled (and thus not to be questioned), we might harm them by perpetuating a dominant paradigm or cultural hierarchy that oppresses them.

These are powerful objections. I thoroughly agree that it is possible to give false expectations or misinform students based on our ignorance of norms of other disciplines. That is why, generally speaking, composition should not prepare students by teaching them to adhere to norms of specific fields (composition courses "linked" with a particular discipline are probably an exception). Not all composition courses attempt to cover the supposed norms of other fields, but many do, as evidenced by several textbooks (see, for example, Bazerman, 1995; Kennedy, Kennedy, and Smith, 1996). There are, though, far too many disciplines, genres, and conventions to cover in first-year composition courses, and composition teachers lack the requisite experience and knowledge to have firm understandings of these norms. This is especially true of teaching assistants, most of whom are still being initiated into their own field. Preparing students for WAC is *not* synonymous with teaching students to follow specific disciplinary norms.

Michael Carter's (1990) theory of expertise and composition suggests another route: Composition teachers can provide student writers with *general* strategies they can use until they acquire *discipline-specific* strategies in noncomposition classrooms. Drawing on multidisciplinary research, Carter argues that experts in a given field use general strategies and refine these as they learn more specialized (local) approaches. Experts are successful because they once relied on general skills until they were able to accumulate specialized skills through experience in specific contexts, and because these general skills continue to allow experts to deal with atypical situations that arise. Linguists have similarly pointed out general discourse strategies that cut across not only disciplines, but languages and cultures. For example, people from diverse cultures draw on the same basic strategies for being polite, despite the fact that a culture affects how these are embodied and refined (Brown & Levinson, 1987). But is there agreement on *which* general skills or knowledge, beyond the minutiae of handbook grammar, can transfer specifically to WAC? Even within a discipline, people have individual reactions to writing, but this does not preclude agreement and overlap at some levels. Readers across disciplines, for example, draw on similar concerns when they provide feedback on writing or evaluate it (for example, Beason, 1993; Diederich, 1974; Eblen, 1983; Jones, 1994; Mallonee & Breihan, 1985), although these readers disagree on how important a given concern is (Faigley & Hansen, 1985). Research thus points toward shared general assumptions of writing without denying the importance of context and disciplinary norms. These research perspectives offer a way to think about general strategies for writing—and how they can become a major feature of composition as service.

Another area of research—discourse genre—indicates how composition courses can help students gain general strategies useful for WAC. Researchers have shown a renewed interest in genre (for example, Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Charney & Carlson, 1995; Freedman, 1993). Although much of this work shows that specific genres, such as empirical reports in psychology, are linked with disciplinary ways of thinking, teachers across academic disciplines often assign more general genres that are similar, such as papers applying theory into practice (see, for example, Bridgeman & Carlson, 1984; Schmersahl & Stay, 1992). Many writing teachers, in fact, base their courses around such genres (for example, the summary or article review). A danger of their approach is that it can lead to the plug-and-chug teaching of five-paragraph themes. Coe (1994) warns of a "neoclassical dogmatism of forced school genres" that would have students "stretch and amputate their intended expressions" (p. 158), but he also argues that the genre approach works if the teacher highlights audience awareness (how a genre is shaped around readers' needs in a particular context) and uses genre as a heuristic from which students digress as needed (see also Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995, pp. 160–161).

Composition, then, should not be defined so much as a "skills course" but as a writing (or rhetoric) course that emphasizes how general strategies apply to genres that respond to—and are shaped by—the specifics of a rhetorical situation. As Freedman and Medway (1994) explain, a rhetorically informed view defines genre as "a matter not just of generating a text with certain formal characteristics but of using generic resources to act effectively on a situation through a text" (p. 11). Composition students might, for instance, write a response to a rhetorical exigency involving an audience of nonspecialists. The class could examine the genres suitable for the situation, draw on general strategies relevant to these genres, and discuss how these strategies could be refined based on situational factors. Or, in dealing with the genre of argumentation, the course could cover the Toulmin framework, a particularly apt choice since it acknowledges general and situation-dependent aspects of argumentation (Toulmin, Rieke, & Janik, 1979).[4]

Many composition classes utilize Toulmin and genres, yet doing so does not necessarily mean these classes also stress Carter's (1990) point that general strategies offer writers flexible starting points that are useful until students refine their situation-dependent skills. Nor does discussing genre or general strategies necessarily mean that teachers are emphasizing how these prepare students for WAC.

An emphasis on transferability and applicability is necessary for students to appreciate the connection between composition and WAC. By their nature, general writing strategies are abstract and broadly defined, so composition teachers would need to illustrate how these can be manifested in various ways. But this open-endedness is also their strength: Because general strategies are broadly defined, they are adaptable. Discussions of discipline-based writing would indeed be useful, not in showing students how to write in a specific discipline (compare Peterson, 1992), but to exemplify a general strategy and how the situation refines it—thereby demonstrating not just a strategy, but the need to consider context. By describing how, say, an empirical report in psychology is organized, students could better understand what structure, coherence, and transitions mean; could determine why the report is organized the way it is; and could sharpen their ability to analyze writing. Shortly, I will discuss the need to evaluate academic discourse in terms of ideological implications, but on one level an analysis of disciplinary writing should be descriptive rather than prescriptive—admittedly not an easy task. Linton, Madigan, and Johnson (1994) explain that to some degree, the writing teacher must be conservative regarding how much s/he can teach students about disciplinary norms; the teacher should avoid telling students how to write in a discipline, but should demonstrate how disciplines adapt general strategies, such as those related to organization, citation style, and language choice. By considering the social and cognitive aspects of writing, this approach illustrates that a composition classroom focusing on general skills is neither simplistic nor insipid. As Rose (1995) explains, the term "skill" may be denigrating to many academics because it implies remediation and a lack of content. Nonetheless, the skills involved in writing are far reaching and sophisticated, for they shape cognition, define the self, and contextualize information.

Much more could be said on pedagogy that prepares students for WAC, but my purpose is not to elaborate on technique. My intent is to point out that there is at least one approach, perhaps many, that can prepare students without the composition teacher having to be an expert on all disciplinary norms, or pretending to be such an expert.

I turn now to the second way in which a composition course might harm students in preparing them to produce academic writing. By teaching students to follow academic norms, we might be helping to maintain the status quo in terms of who decides what conventions are worth following, what forms of evidence and thinking are admissible, and whether the writer should question—as opposed to merely follow—the discourse practices, genres, and standards of the disciplines. Describing the Marxist sociologist's view of education, Myers (1986) writes:

> Schools not only teach academic knowledge; they teach work according to schedule, acceptance of authority, and competition among individuals and between groups. They also help provide a justification for the hierarchies of society, so that, for instance, people accept that manual labor should pay less than mental labor. This process of adapting and carrying on the assumptions of our society is called *reproducing ideology*. (p. 156)

As Myers argues, however, such indoctrination is possible with teachers who consider themselves reformers, for the social system they are placed in will construct even their view of reality. No teacher is immune from indoctrinating, but composition teachers can prepare students to write in the disciplines, as well as understand the social and ideological ramifications. To do so, composition teachers must carefully consider what it means to "prepare students for college-level writing." Students are not truly prepared unless they are able not only to "do" writing in the sense of producing a text, but able to critique the rhetorical situation that has called for a text, able to understand what constraints have been placed on anyone agreeing to be a writer and reader in that situation, and therefore able to decide if it is worth being a part of that discourse situation or community.

To be prepared for WAC, students must decide what they are losing, gaining, and compromising when producing academic discourse. I agree, then, with Myers (1986), Herzberg (1991), and others who are concerned that the composition course is forsaking its potential to raise social awareness if it is merely a "how to" course rather than a "why do" course. Still, these two aspects are not incompatible; they in fact can build upon one another. Students cannot produce academic writing without understanding what it really is. To see what a writer's options are in producing a text, students must understand the before and after of the text—the social forces that lead to conventions and the results of adhering to them. Put another way, how can students understand a general strategy, such as a way of organizing discourse, unless they are also exposed to examples of organizational schemes and consider why these take certain shapes? The "why" is not only a matter of the immediate situation or audience; it also includes the impact of society, ideology, and the dominant culture. And how can I enable students to recognize cultural constraints on the organizational pattern of an empirical report written by a psychologist unless they first understand the general skill of organization, what it means when we use terms like "structure," "cohesion," or "transition"?

Thus, in learning to produce college writing, students need to critique examples of disciplinary writing as well as understand how these illustrate the connection between general and specialized writing strategies. In fact, to understand what academic discourse is, students should also perceive what it traditionally has *not* been. Elbow (1991) argues that, because academic conventions often mask a lack of real understanding, students should use nonacademic discourse (avoiding buzzwords and jargon, for example) so that they can attain a true understanding of the content matter required for good academic discourse. Incorporating nontraditional forms and styles into composition can, besides being worthy in themselves, offer students a better understanding—and a contrast to—the traditional academic genres they will produce.

A brief digression moving outside the academy might illustrate my point. Not long ago, an artist on National Public Radio was discussing his work. People often think of artists as "free spirits," who pursue their unique vision even if it clashes with mainstream society. But this artist, like many others, spent most of his time on commissioned art, producing electronic sculptures as called for by his sponsors. He said that almost all his work for the last two years had been commissioned by a Miami airport. It was a project he was personally invested in, but one that meant adapting his vision so he could work with other people on the project. His point was not that this arrangement stifled his creativity or kept him completely away from more personal projects. Almost everyday, he found time to work here and there on sketches of other artwork, and he found ways to work many of these ideas into the airport project. By integrating personal and group visions of art, he was able to grow, sustain interest in assorted ideas, and still work on a collaborative, commissioned project.

Similarly, our pedagogy need not be an "either/or" matter of helping students produce academic writing *or* exposing them to nontraditional genres. I am not calling for a pure balance or loose eclecticism; a course needs a distinct focus and purpose, but in so doing, it can also expose students to diversity and alternatives. For example, Pamela Annas (1985) describes how she prepares students for producing academic writing, yet she does so without abandoning her feminist perspective. Students write, for example, a position paper (a traditional academic genre), but base their arguments "at least as much on lived personal experience as on more conventional sources of information" (p. 368). While a primary teaching objective should be clear to provide curricular and theoretic coherence, teachers such as Annas and Elbow remind us there are ways to offer diverse yet complementary perspectives that prepare students for academic discourse.

Moral Residue and Service

One final note on duties. While we may have an obligation to prima facie duties, our actual duties are determined by examining the demands of the specific situation, demands such as competing prima facie duties. Pietroski (1993) explains that two types of "moral residue" occur when a duty is overridden: regret and residual obligations (p. 509). Many people like to boast, "I have no regrets." Regret, though, is not altogether bad. Regret is often a mark of a sensitive, moral person put into a complicated ethical dilemma, and regret leads to residual obligations because it signals to this person that s/he cannot overlook the consequences of forsaking a duty overridden by a more urgent one (Pietroski, 1993). People should attend to such consequences in a substantive way, not merely to "absolve" themselves, but to mend any damage done by neglecting a duty.

Earlier, I explained how I broke an assumed promise to my son. I did so because I had previously made an explicit promise to my wife that the two of us would have dinner at a restaurant. As she and I left home, I felt no small amount of regret, which taught me to be more careful about the messages I send Russell. The next day, I changed my original schedule so that he and I could go fishing. My point is not that "father knows best" or that residual obligations can be so easily handled; the point is that when duties are overridden, people have an ethical responsibility to return to them, seeking to address them as best they can.

After a semester of helping students produce academic discourse, some composition teachers might feel that their students still seem unable to critique the ideology or power structure inherent in academic discourses. These teachers have residual obligations that can be addressed, perhaps by revising the syllabus or seeking cross-curricular changes to deal with the indoctrination issue. This possibility of change is central to my overall position and is one I will elaborate on while considering the third ethical perspective.

THE ETHIC OF CARE, OR CAN WE FOCUS ON INDIVIDUALS, NOT ABSTRACT RULES?

> One might say that ethics has been discussed largely in the language of the father.... The mother's voice has been silent. Human caring and the memory of caring and being cared for, which I shall argue form the foundation of ethical response, have not received attention except as outcomes of ethical behavior.
>
> —Nel Noddings (1984, p. 1)

Overview of the Ethic of Care

As noted earlier, the assumptions of even the most conscientious people are constrained by social structures in which they are placed. This phenomenon extends to those who have written of ethics, for ethicists have increasingly argued that most ethical theories reflect the ways of thinking of white males.

The ethic of care, a form of feminist ethics, offers an alternative that is especially relevant to teaching, given the need for teachers to care about people's needs (see Trachsel, Chapter 9 in this volume). While the ethic of care has taken various forms, they generally share three interrelated traits: 1) privileging real individuals rather than a universal ideal, 2) defining ethics in terms of responsibilities rather than rights, and 3) including the one-caring among the cared-for.

Regarding the first characteristic, Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* (1982) examines how women tend to reconstruct hypothetical problems in terms of real people in real situations. In so doing, women do not rely on hierarchies of abstract principles that characterize other ethical systems. While Ross (1930) may differentiate between ideal and actual ethical duties, he clearly focuses on the former. The ethic of care, in contrast, rejects defining ethics simply in terms of the universalizability of abstract rules:

> Since so much depends on the subjective experience of those involved in ethical encounters, conditions are rarely "sufficiently similar" for me to declare that you must do what I must do. (Noddings, 1984, p. 5)

Thus, the ethic of care is based not on applying fixed principles, but on determining the special needs of individuals in real contexts (Blustein, 1991; Manning, 1992).

I turn now to the second characteristic of an ethic of care: responsibilities. Most other ethical systems stress the impartial distribution of rights predicated on equality. In this way, they promote separateness among individuals, in that the focus is securing my rights and not infringing on others' rights, lest they infringe on mine (Gilligan, 1982). The ethic of care emphasizes responsibility rather than rights, an emphasis that brings people together rather than separating them, as Rita Manning (1992) explains:

> An ethic of care involves a morality grounded in relationship and response. When we are committed to an ethic of care, we see ourselves as part of a network of care and our obligations as requiring a caring response to those who share these networks and to those whose need creates an obligation to respond. (p. xiv)

Manning also states that care has two elements: a *disposition* to care (a willingness to receive others and give the attention required to fill these needs) and an *obligation* to care for. Therefore, caring means I should be sensitive to the individual's needs and act accordingly. An impartial ethic of rights may be appropriate when dealing with the impersonal public contexts of law or economics, but it is a poor match for situations that require not detachment, but engagement with individuals (Young, 1990).

The third characteristic of an ethic of care is essential to respond to critics who say an ethic of care calls for unquestioning self-sacrifice. Caring does not necessarily mean that the one-caring is always at the call of others, or that the one-caring must forsake personal goals and needs. Because we all have a need to be cared for, the one-caring is included among those whom s/he should care for. Caring for one's own well-being is a way to avoid burnout (Manning, 1992), but more importantly it preserves and builds relationships by showing others that the one-caring is among those who have needs to be cared for by others, changing the relationship from dependence to interdependence. As a consequence, care involves an "injunction to act responsively toward self and others and thus to sustain connection" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 149).

Including oneself among the cared-for thus gives rise to *reciprocity*. Caring, as noted, depends on building relationships and maintaining these through caring, and such a network means the one-caring will likely become the cared-for over the course of time. Manning (1992) explains that "caring can take place in potentially reciprocal relationships between human beings" (p. 67). Potential reciprocity, then, is necessary for a caring relationship; the cared-for should contribute in some fashion to the relationship, although the one-caring should be driven neither by a goal of reciprocity nor expectations of gratitude (Noddings, 1984). Being receptive, willing to have needs filled, and simply being pleased with caring are forms of contribution (Noddings, 1984). Reciprocity, whatever its form, is needed to maintain an ethic of care; it not only sustains connections, but defines and promotes a cycle of caring. As Noddings says, "How good I can be is partly a function of how you—the other—receive and respond to me" (p. 6).

Uniqueness and Service

Given the uniqueness of individuals and the necessity of considering real situations, one ramification of an ethic of care is it reminds us we cannot arrive at a fixed rule as to the mission of first-year composition. This ramification may seem to contradict my stance that composition in general has a service mission, but an ethic of care does not necessarily assume that moral principles have *no* place in caring, only that they not *replace* caring. At the very least, they can be rules of thumb that "reflect a consensus about moral minimums" (Manning, 1992, p. 82). Accordingly, we can describe general principles of service as long as we realize that anything we arrive at is a guideline—a useful starting point for more situated discussions, rather than a finished set of moral absolutes.

I seek not to undermine my own argument, but to acknowledge its limitations. I also maintain there is sufficient commonalty among students, teachers, and the larger community to suggest that composition should normally be expected to prepare students for WAC. It is important for those involved in the service issue at a particular site to draw on not only general theoretical discussions in the discipline, but on empirical studies at assorted sites. These offer possibilities, reasons, and evidence relevant to numerous sites. Even an ethic of caring is built on the assumption that such relevance exists, hence the importance of caring and being cared for in all people's lives (Noddings, 1984). Nevertheless, each site—each individual teacher, program, and school—must eventually consider the service issue in light of its own situation.

Responsibilities, Rights, and Service

An ethic of rights might focus teachers' attention on maintaining their own rights, especially the right to teach how they think best based on their training, experience, and expertise. An ethic of responsibility, in contrast, makes it clear that teachers should focus on filling the needs of individuals—not in an impartial way, but through empathizing with students and understanding their needs. Central to an ethic of responsibility is appreciating the individuality of people and their needs; otherwise, we cannot accurately define what we are responsible for doing when we care for one another. Because of this focus on helping individuals with their own needs, it would be tempting to say that care ethics should lead us to focus foremost on helping students reflect on their lives, express their true identities, and determine their individual needs. As important as these are, an ethic of responsibility does not mean that self-reflection is more important than all other needs. Instead, caring means first assessing students' needs, and this leads us to two categories of possible needs.

As White (1994) points out, composition is both a *socializing* and *individualizing* discipline. That is, students have two needs that a composition can fill: 1) to write effectively so they can participate within an academic community, and 2) to use writing so they can reflect on their individuality. This first need concerns how a student can be a part of an academic community; the second means considering why the student should participate in such a group, given his/her own uniqueness. An ethic of care indeed requires us to consider the personal dimension, to see students as unique individuals, rather than simply as people whose language should be adjusted to reflect group norms. At the same time, care ethics caution us about imposing our vision of individuality on students. Just as we avoid presuming to be experts on the discourse of a specific academic field other than our own, so should we avoid assuming, in what may be a patriarchal fashion, that individual students do not *really* know their needs (a daring presumption, especially in a time when many returning students are enrolling).

Being receptive to students' self-assessment of their needs might not be as common in composition as we might think. For instance, Towns's study (1993) of the way composition researchers refer to students indicates we view them as "fledglings" lacking the skills and knowledge we must bestow (pp. 95–96). True, many students just out of high school have been too dependent on family and friends to have reflected in depth on their individuality. Certainly, then, we should promote self-reflection and help them understand what they lose and gain in terms of individuality by participating in academic discourse communities. But an ethic of care would have us appreciate the students' assessment of their own needs, and avoid judging that their opinions of themselves require correction. Referring to the teacher/student relationship, Manning (1992) writes that an ethic of care calls for reserving such judgment and for "a willingness to receive the other as he/she sees him/herself" (p. 100).

As survey research indicates, many students are in college because they want to be part of several groups: college-graduates, high-income consumers, members of a particular profession, and so on (Astin, 1993). We could assume that students are naive and do not know what they need, or that they have been manipulated by a dominant power structure to have needs that are insidiously manufactured to perpetuate this structure. These assumptions might be accurate. We cannot, however, adhere to an ethic of responsibility or care if we define responsibility as dismissing students' perceptions of their needs, even if we believe students should consider more individualizing needs. We should facilitate individualization by encouraging self-expression and cultural criticism, but an ethic of care suggests we also have a responsibility of attending to a need to prepare students for producing academic discourse. In fact, this need has an urgency that heightens our responsibility to fill it; most composition students are already writing for noncomposition courses and will, if successful, soon be writing in upper-division classes.

In sum, an ethic of responsibility does translate into an individualizing function for first-year composition, but—at the very least—this same ethic means giving equal attention to the socializing function. An ethic of care, then, reminds us of our responsibility to address both needs.

One's Own Needs and Service

An implication of including the one-caring among the cared-for is reciprocity. As noted, reciprocity takes many forms but, however defined, it means care is not a one-way interaction in which one person always gives, the other always receives. Because an overall goal of an ethic of care is not simply to encourage separate acts of caring, but to build and promote *networks* of caring, reciprocity is essential. All parties must be potential care-givers for these networks to thrive.

In terms of the mission of first-year composition, reciprocity implies that service should extend in both directions. As unconventional as it may seem (given the way catalogs implicitly "rank" courses in terms of hierarchical numbering), WAC programs in particular have a service mission in respect to composition courses. Of course, we should care about preparing students for WAC regardless of what a WAC program does to reciprocate. The way in which students respond—by growing as writers, for instance—is sufficient reciprocity from students to sustain part of the network. What reciprocity should WAC teachers offer? Someone subscribing to duties ethics might say to expect little, for composition teachers are merely "doing their duty." However, preparing students for WAC is a form of caring for WAC teachers; by so preparing, we help these teachers fill their needs of facilitating student learning and communication, meaning that WAC teachers should respond and reciprocate.

And *how* should they reciprocate? Response and reciprocity might consist of "spontaneous delight and happy growth" (Noddings, 1984, p. 181), but I believe that is not enough. While attempting to avoid a "you owe us" mentality, I wish to take the notion of reciprocity to a more dynamic level needed to sustain and enrich the composition/WAC network. If composition and WAC teachers are to form a network of caring—a community of teachers committed to enriching student writing and learning in academic settings—then reciprocity means WAC teachers have ethical responsibilities to 1) build on what composition teachers are doing, and 2) reinforce what composition teachers have learned—through teaching as well as theoretical and empirical research—about writing and learning. Some compositionists wanting to prepare students for WAC seem to assume that we must learn the specific conventions and assumptions of writing in the academic disciplines (see, for example, Daemmrich, 1989; Peterson, 1992). Even if we work closely with colleagues in these disciplines, it is a task beyond most composition teachers' time and energy. As discussed earlier, we should examine writing in other disciplines, perhaps not so much to master these forms as to provide a heuristic for understanding how a general skill or strategy can be refined. But WAC teachers have an ethical responsibility to broaden their own perspectives of what "effective writing" is and, specifically, to understand what their composition program does to prepare students.

By continuing the work begun in composition (thereby validating it), WAC courses provide a service to composition. Yet WAC courses cannot do so unless their teachers learn what goes on in first-year composition. In many cases, this learning occurs at WAC workshops, but rarely can a single workshop sufficiently inform teachers about their composition program. Composition programs can assist though one-on-one interaction, committee meetings, or circulating documents that explain the program. This communication can have more than one benefit: Besides informing WAC teachers, composition teachers can learn more about WAC (as called for in the utilitarian perspective).

But reciprocity entails more than understanding the workings of a composition program. It means addressing a thread running throughout this essay: the need for students and faculty to understand the ideological implications of joining an academic community and viewing reality through its discourse conventions. Daniel Mahala (1991) argues that this is the next stage for WAC programs—a move beyond the methods approach that has dominated WAC efforts. I see this next stage not only as a theoretical enhancement, but an ethical one, an implication of the reciprocity inherent in an ethic of care. Reciprocity means that WAC teachers should not only seek to reinforce what was done in first-year composition; they should also fill a need that most writing teachers have—a need to understand the nature of writing and the impact of teaching writing on students' personal lives.

In other words, WAC can also be a place for students to critique academic conventions, experiment with unconventional discourse, or help students reflect on their individuality in relation to academic and professional communities. As Susan McLeod (1995) puts it, WAC directors should become agents of change who promote "an educational revolution at the university level" (p. 114). Some compositionists argue that first-year composition is an ideal place for cultural criticism—for engaging students in personal essays that question widely held assumptions governing their expected academic roles, or for analyzing the ways in which discourse conventions foster certain ways of perceiving reality (see, for example, Elbow, 1991; Foster, 1994; Herzberg, 1991; Linton, Madigan, & Johnson, 1994; Peterson, 1992; Odell, 1995; Spellmeyer, 1989). These perspectives have merit, but imply that "the other end" of the curriculum cannot serve in such capacities. Instead of being a means of maintaining the status quo of institutional and social power structures, WAC programs can be a vehicle for reform, reexamination, and questioning of disciplinary assumptions and boundaries. As Mahala (1991) and Russell (1990) explain, WAC may hold such promise, but it is difficult to achieve, insofar as faculty who are comfortably located within a discipline rarely rush to call into question their disciplinary assumptions and discourse conventions. But reformation is possible if, as Myers (1986) suggests, teachers retain a bit of skepticism about what writing assignments do to reproduce a social system, that is, if teachers form a habit of questioning academic discourse conventions. We should also recall that not all WAC instructors are entrenched in teaching students to adhere to disciplinary norms (unless we assume that only compositionists seek to reform the institution). Indeed, a study of WAC teachers found that one type of teacher is the "border crosser." As compared to the more common "gatekeepers," who stress adherence to disciplinary norms, the border crossers sometimes set aside conventions to encourage risk taking, self-expression, and questioning of disciplinary conventions (Kleinsasser, Collins, & Nelson, 1994).

Simply put, reciprocity is essential for a caring network involving composition and WAC programs. To create a network composed of students, composition teachers, and WAC teachers, it is important for WAC teachers to respond, first, by learning more about what first-year composition can (and cannot) do to help students and, second, by working with writing teachers to assist them in determining how discourse norms create (for both better and worse) assumptions of reality, power, and self. Even while composition and WAC teachers are promoting such rethinking of academic discourse, the composition course can still focus on preparing students for producing academic writing, as maintained throughout this chapter. It is not as though changes will occur so quickly that by the time students exit our composition courses there will be entirely new paradigms in their fields. In fact, working with WAC teachers in a reciprocal way—preparing students for WAC even while the definition of WAC is being broadened—may be the only way to foster lasting change. The college curriculum is too complex and involves too many people for composition teachers alone to reform it. Network building, reciprocity, and genuine care are needed to carry out this effort.

SYNTHESIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The three ethical theories I have described may lack an overarching principle of what is ethical, but that can be an advantage. By offering diverse perspectives, they provide a rich array of possibilities and reasons, reflecting the diverse ways people will consider the ethics of service. These systems might appear to conflict at a theoretical level by forefronting one of three concepts: maximizing happiness, abiding by self-evident moral duties, or the responsibility to care. Perhaps the most apparent difference is that duties ethics (along with some forms of utilitarianism) emphasize the generalizability of impartial rules, while an ethic of care responds to the personal, unique circumstances of an ethical dilemma. Dichotomizing ethical systems, though, is unnecessary if we consider not merely their differences, but their overlap. In *Care and Commitment,* Blustein (1991) argues that personal and universal values are interrelated. Caring about personal values (as opposed to impersonal moral principles) is what individuals find fulfilling in their lives. At the same time, it is difficult to care about something that has personal value unless it also points beyond itself, unless the value of what individuals commit themselves to does not emanate simply from within one individual. Thus, caring about specific individuals or one's own projects is truly meaningful when it also reflects an impersonal value, one that gives our lives coherence by going beyond a specific act. Gilligan (1982) also reconciles different ethical perspectives, noting that development for both sexes involves "an integration of rights and responsibilities through the discovery of the complementarity of these disparate views" (p. 100). While an ethical system may forefront one particular element of the ethical situation, rarely does a well-developed system leave no room for the other elements. As noted throughout this chapter, these three systems share some features, although their roles may differ; duties ethics, for instance, value beneficence (helping others) as does an ethic of caring, while all systems, not just utilitarianism, attend to the consequences of ethical acts. Incompatibility dissolves, then, when ethical systems forefront rather than discard elements of the human experience.

To summarize the assorted implications raised, I propose that composition programs and their schools consider three basic ethical obligations, along with numerous resulting obligations. While respecting the need for schools to form their own procedures, I believe one important function of ethics is to help us understand which acts are ethically desirable. Accordingly, I offer the following as general principles and starting points for more situated deliberations:

1. *Based on a rich understanding of the issue and the specific circumstances, discuss the service issue using a public forum composed of teachers, if not students and administrators, from across campus.* Composition teachers, despite their expertise, do not have a sufficiently global perspective of students' and the schools' needs. Thus, a forum—including WAC teachers, in particular—should discuss what a composition program can and cannot do to prepare students. Ongoing data collection, such as determining students' and teachers' needs, is needed to make an ethical decision. The discussion should draw on principles and research that go beyond the site, but in essence the forum must consider what would most benefit students and teachers at their site.

2. *Decide on the mission of first-year composition—and publicize the decision.* Based on these discussions, a composition program should determine if it should, can, and will prepare students for WAC. Those teachers within the composition program should then ask themselves if they can, in good conscience, abide by a consensus. Whatever the result, the program should make public its decision, making an implicit promise explicit, or openly declaring there is no promise of any sort as to the mission of composition.

3. *Deal with consequences of the decision.* If the teachers involved in the composition program decide not to adopt a service mission, they should do one of the following:

- *Seek to abolish composition as a requirement,* assuming it is required solely because it is expected to prepare students for writing in the disciplines; or
- *Justify composition to the campus* (either as a requirement or option) as a course worthy in its own right, even though its foremost goal is not to prepare students for producing writing in the disciplines.

If the people running the program do decide on a service mission, they too have formidable obligations and responsibilities:

- *Better understand what it means to prepare students to produce academic writing.* In addition to data collection needed to make an informed decision on the service issue, a composition program (supported by the school) should conduct ongoing research on the effects of the program and on the nature of writing done across the campus (this research also aids in reexamining the basic question of "service or not"). WAC programs provide another means of better understanding how a composition program can achieve its mission. Of central importance is defining the general strategies (perhaps by contrasting them with specialized strategies) that can be transferred from composition to WAC courses.
- *Prepare composition students for WAC by encouraging students to* 1) produce and critique academic discourse, and 2) consider implications for the self. Students cannot truly understand how to engage in academic discourse without contrasting it with nontraditional genres or without understanding the nature of academic discourse (for example, the implications of power). Even though the emphasis in composition is on preparing students for academic writing, some exposure to these areas is needed.
- *Promote ongoing learning about writing among WAC teachers.* Just as composition teachers learn from WAC teachers, so should WAC teachers learn from composition teachers about the nature of writing. WAC workshops traditionally have been useful for exposing faculty to teaching methods involving writing, but WAC must move to other levels of learning, including reforming WAC. In particular, WAC teachers should consider nontraditional approaches to academic discourse, such as questioning its assumptions and encouraging students to engage in more personal and diverse forms of writing. In this way, reciprocity between WAC and composition is encouraged, in that WAC not only validates what composition is doing, but is also considering what compositionists have learned about the nature of discourse and the impact it has on students' individuality.

- *Care for one's personal goals and attend to residual obligations.* In preparing students for WAC, we still might feel we neglect goals that made us want to teach writing. For many teachers, these goals *are* preparing students for WAC. But others may feel, even after using nontraditional approaches (such as those noted above) for preparing students, that they sacrifice too much. Or perhaps they neglect one ethical duty to adhere to that of preparing students. These are reasons why writing teachers should teach a range of courses (not simply those with a service nature) and why teachers should find meaningful ways to incorporate personal goals into first-year composition.

My consideration of ethics, though long, is not comprehensive. Another relevant issue is the ethical obligation for inter- as well as intra-college communication on what preparation means. With many students transferring composition credits from community colleges, we need to extend the discussions and research needed for ethical decision making. This task is formidable, but ethical obligations do not diminish simply because they are difficult to achieve. Another related issue is examining the extent to which college should prepare students for writing *outside* the university. If such is the case, as Odell (1995) argues, we need to consider whether college writing resembles what scholars produce or what professionals outside the college are actually writing. What we do to prepare students for WAC may largely depend on what WAC itself is preparing students to do.

These two issues deserve more attention than the gloss presented here, but no matter what perspective we have on them, the basic service issue I have addressed will remain vital. My overall position may not be satisfying to all those who wish to transform the composition curriculum, but I do not disagree with what most of these reformers seek: a revisioning of what composition can do to promote plurality and self-awareness. What I disagree with is the position that we can dismiss an ethical obligation to do what most students and teachers believe composition is doing, and I certainly do not believe traditional academic writing should ever be completely dismissed, unless we assume that this broad genre of writing is inherently evil or banal. I submit, in fact, that many of us learned a great deal by writing (and reading) academic discourse. It is one of many useful forms, and we should set ourselves up to work with—not against—our colleagues in using composition and WAC to introduce students to academic discourse and other diverse forms of writing.

NOTES

[1] As Morris (1995) explains, the term "service" carries negative connotations (for example, serving in the sense of "wait staff," who serve as intermediaries between

cook and customer, or the notion of serving a prison sentence). I use this term because it is widely used in describing courses such as first-year composition, and because I have nothing better to offer.

[2] Because I offer a range of ethical perspectives, I am unable to cover all aspects of these three systems, such as the debates ethicists have had over the meaning of key terms. Ethicists have, for instance, long argued over what John Stuart Mill (1969) meant when referring to the greatest "happiness" for the greatest number of people. I focus on the major defining points of these three systems.

[3] Pietroski (1993) makes a comparison to science, pointing out that generalizations in the sciences are not rejected, despite their exceptions. Darwinian and Mendelian theories of evolution and genetics indicate, for example, that the proportion of organisms having gene X will *increase* if it produces a useful trait. In fact, though, this increase does not always occur, given other genetic rules. When a gene is replicated, a nearby gene Y might also be copied; if Y produces a harmful trait, then through selection, both genes Y and X will actually *decrease* in the population. Scientific generalizations help explain phenomena, despite such exceptions and conflicts; neither should ethical generalizations, such as prime facie duties, be discounted simply because they might conflict.

[4] Related to genre is Kinneavy's taxonomy based on aim (see Crusius, 1989, pp. 119–121). Here, too, is an area of study that can offer information on general strategies.

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chapter 8

Ethics in Technical/Professional Communication: From Telling the Truth to Making Better Decisions in a Complex World

Cezar M. Ornatowski
San Diego State University

The issue of ethics in technical and professional communication has become more urgent and more problematic in recent years, thanks both to events in the public arena and theoretical developments. Well-publicized disasters, such as the Space Shuttle *Challenger* explosion or the Exxon Valdez oil spill, brought the issue of professional responsibility to public attention. At the same time, theoretical developments in rhetoric, literary theory, organizational studies, the sociology of science and technology, and related disciplines have challenged and complicated traditional conceptions of ethics in technical communication. As a result, the topic of ethics has become "hot," as Scott Sanders and M. Jimmie Killingsworth (1995) note in their introduction to a special issue of the journal *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication.* According to Sanders and Killingsworth, ethics is "the emerging (and reemerging) issue in an emerging discipline" (p. 131).

While most technical communication scholars would probably agree that ethics is an important, if not a central, concern, there is little consensus on how to define ethics in technical communication, where to locate it, or how to deal with it in the classroom. The difficulty is understandable. The problem of ethics in technical communication cuts across many other problematic and important issues. In addition, recent theory and research have complicated the problem of ethics even further and the implications of that complexity for thinking about ethics have not been digested yet.

When they are, the issue of ethics has the potential to bring about major changes in how technical communication is conceived and taught.

In this chapter, rather than review the quickly growing and very diverse literature on ethics in technical communication, I will show why ethics is so important, compare the different traditions of thinking about ethics and point out some of the problems they present, and suggest in what ways the current interest in ethics may challenge and change the current technical communication paradigm.

THE PROBLEM OF ETHICS IN TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

In its broadest sense, technical communication is the area of theory, practice, and pedagogy concerned with the dominant discourses of our civilization: science and technology. These are the discourses of the laboratory, the factory, the marketplace, the hospital, and the launching pad. They comprise reports, proposals, memos, letters, presentations, articles, instructions, manuals, and countless other documents that are the lifeblood of modern organizations and institutions. They fill the volumes of paper (or gigabites of data storage devices) that attend most organized processes and technologies. They contain (one should rather say constitute) much of the knowledge that supports our civilization. The rules, conventions, and practices governing these discourses form, to use Carolyn Miller's (1989) suggestive phrase, the "rhetoric of the world of work" (p. 24). The question of ethics in technical communication is thus the question of the nature, status, and scope of ethical considerations in this rhetoric.

That technical communication is somehow bound up with ethics is beyond doubt. Although in our worst nightmares we can perhaps imagine some Carrollesque high-tech world where reports marshal fictitious data, proposals advance impossible projects, manuals invite us to perform life-threatening operations, and not a word of information is to be trusted, our workaday reality (if not our very sanity) depends on a measure of trust in the integrity of the texts and data that regulate most of our social, economic, professional, and even personal lives. Today, however, this trust increasingly appears to be founded on shaky intellectual grounds. Any attempt to offer systematic, rational grounds for such trust bogs down inevitably in some of the thorniest issues in technical communication (and not only in technical communication) theory: the relationship between technical communication and rhetoric; between texts and their organizational and social contexts; between science, technology, and human values; and the status and agency of the technical communicator as author and decision-maker. These issues admit no easy answers, yet they have to be confronted if we are to move beyond simple faith in the inherent righteousness of individuals and organizations and beyond simplistic injunctions to be good and honest under all circumstances. When they are confronted, it may turn out that the problem of ethics in technical communication may be less a question of definition (of what ethics in technical communication is) than a question of vision: what we want ethical technical communication to be in light of the challenges and complexities presented by a global, information-driven technological civilization.

CONCEPTIONS OF ETHICS IN TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Semantic Ethics

The fundamental connection between technical communication and ethics is rooted in the evolution of American engineering professionalism (Constance, 1978; Kynell, 1996; Stevenson, 1987). Vannevar Bush, the legendary president of the American Engineering Council, in his 1939 address before the Council, located the source of engineering professionalism in its "ministry to the people" (qtd. in Constance, 1978, p.13). This ministry meant that the engineer took charge of important affairs critical to the welfare of individuals and of society by virtue of both specialized technical knowledge and a superior moral sense. According to John Constance, theorist and historian of engineering,

> The layman looks to the professional men because he knows nothing about their technology. He has to depend entirely on their integrity. The people have to *take the engineer's word* for it that there has been no cheating to gain a dollar here and there when the engineer:
>
> Purifies city drinking water
> Insulates electric wires and apparatus
> Specifies materials for skyscrapers
> Designs linkages for airplane controls
> Exhausts dangerous fumes from buildings
> Designs intricate controls for automatic elevators.
>
> The public has to rely upon the engineer's integrity when he designs and manufactures automobiles or supersonic planes. But this reliance is misplaced if the engineer is not ethical. (emphasis added, p. 13)

The need to "take the engineer's word" neatly articulates the fundamental conjunction of technology (and technical knowledge), morality, and communication, a conjunction that underlies traditional thinking about ethics in technical communication and provides a productive starting point for challenging and complicating this thinking.

The fundamental way of thinking about this conjunction has been in terms of representational truth or informational accuracy. In these terms, ethics in technical communication is a matter of

- the soundness of information in the scientific sense (reproducibility of results, sufficiency of data, soundness of procedure, reliability of information);
- the fairness and legality of business practices (demands of disclosure and compliance, adherence to specifications, representation of products and practices in such documents as proposals and contracts);
- the legal implications of technologies and technical documents (warnings, safety labels, product information, adequacy of disclosure);
- the marketing uses of technical information (fairness of product representation, fair practices in advertising); and
- the ownership of information (issues of copyright, plagiarism, confidentiality, and so on).

Such considerations have usually been dealt with normatively, by spelling out the guidelines that would govern ethical communication practice, an approach that Frank Radez (1980) calls "professional ethics" and Scott Sanders (1997) calls "practical ethics." A good example of such guidelines is provided by the old Society for Technical Communication (STC) "Code for Communicators," which, from 1978 until recently, constituted the major code of conduct for technical communicators in the United States. (The code was replaced in 1997 by new "Ethical Guidelines," which I discuss toward the end of this chapter.) According to the code, an ethical technical communicator should,

- Use language and visuals with precision.
- Prefer simple, direct expression of ideas.
- Satisfy the audience's need for information, not my own need for self-expression.
- Hold myself responsible for how well my audience understands my message.
- Respect the work of colleagues, knowing that seldom is only one communications solution right and others wrong.
- Strive continually to improve my professional competence.
- Promote a climate that encourages the exercise of professional judgement and that attracts talented individuals to careers in technical communication. (qtd. in Doheny-Farina, 1989, p. 56)

The STC Code reveals some of the problems and limitations of normative, "truth and accuracy" approaches to ethics in technical communication.

One major problem is the confusion of ends and means. The ethical injunctions are stated in terms of the means ("Use language and visuals with precision"), while what is really at stake is ethical intent (the code does not, I am certain, mean to encourage me to use language and visuals with precision to represent irrelevant or potentially misleading data or to articulate such misrepresentations simply and directly). In other words, the guidelines collapse, in an uncomplicated way, the moral and technical aspects of communicative action, motivation, and technical ability. I must *want to be* truthful and objective (moral, motivational component) and I must *know how to be* truthful and objective in textual and graphic terms (technical component). The relationship between knowing that and knowing how, between ends and means, is assumed to be straightforward and unproblematic, an assumption characteristic of what Jose Luis Aranguren (1973) has called "semantic ethics." The articulation of ethical injunctions in "technical" terms is characteristic of all "semantic" approaches to technical communication ethics.

Philosophical Ethics

Other scholars, such as Harley Sachs (1980), however, have argued that professional conduct cannot be separated from the exercise of moral judgment. These scholars have attempted to deal with the moral component of communicative action by elaborating guidelines to help technical communicators make decisions in problematic situations. Such guidelines usually draw—explicitly or implicitly—on philosophical reflection about ethics. For this reason, Scott Sanders (1997) has called this approach "philosophical ethics."

Mark Wicclair and David Farkas's (1984) assumptions are characteristic of philosophical ethics. Wicclair and Farkas distinguish ethical perspectives from other perspectives: self-interest, legal, and religious. They suggest that "[p]rofessionals in technical communication confront ethical problems at times, just as in law, medicine, engineering, and other fields." To deal with such problems, profesionals "must employ ethical principles," which "offer a means to reason about ethical problems in a systematic and sophisticated manner" (p. 599). Wicclair and Farkas identify three types of such principles: goal-based (based on an evaluation of the consequences of the action), duty-based (based on a moral prohibition or principles, independent of consequences, that is, it is wrong to lie, therefore one must tell the truth, even if a lie does no harm), and rights-based (based on an entitlement that creates corresponding obligations, that is, the right to free speech).

Especially intresting is Wicclair and Farkas's (1984) application of the concept of "ethical dilemma." An ethical dilemma arises, according to Wicclair and Farkas, when these principles "conflict, some pointing in one direction, others in another" (p. 600). When faced with an ethical dilemma, "we must assign priorities to the various conflicting ethical considerations—often a difficult and demanding process" (p. 600). Wicclair and Farkas then offer cases to illustrate the application of these principles in real working life. In one of their cases, which concerns the problem of whether an employee should or should not write a false report that would wrongly assign blame to protect his position, Wicclair and Farkas conclude that the employee, while in a difficult situation, is not actually facing an ethical dilemma, since all the relevant principles point against writing the report. Only the employee's self-interest (he will damage his relationship with his boss and perhaps lose his job) makes the situation personally problematic, but there is no conflict of ethical principles. Such diffidence in the face of concrete situations and pressures seems typical of philosophical ethics. Wicclair and Farkas conclude simply that "[i]t appears to be a condition of human existence that to live a highly ethical life usually exacts from us a certain price" (p. 604).

In the end, after presenting a number of difficult situations that are personally or ethically difficult, Wicclair and Farkas do not really offer advice on how to resolve the problems. They conclude that "deciding to make an appropriate ethical respose to a situation is still a matter of individual conscience and will" (1984, p. 604).

In another philosophical approach, David Sturges (1992) distinguishes between "teleological" (or consequentialist) and "deontological" (or non-consequentialist) approaches to ethics. The teleological approach is based on "concern for the consequences of given behavior," while the deontological approach is based on "the duty of the individual as a member of a social collective" (p. 44). Mike Markel (1993), on the other hand, offers a conception of communication ethics derived from Kant's categorical imperative (to treat ourselves as we would wish to be treated) and from the concept of the ideal society described by the philosopher John Rawls.

Later, in his textbook *Technical Communication: Situations and Strategies*, Markel (1996), following the ethicist Manual Velasquez, lists three kinds of moral standards "useful in confronting ethical dilemmas" (pp. 22–23): rights (consideration of the basic needs and welfare of particular individuals), justice (consideration of the fair distribution of positive and negative effects of an action), and utility (consideration of the effects of an action on the general public). He also makes a distinction between ethical and legal obligations. Among the ethical obligations of the technical communicator, he lists obligations to the employer, to the public, and to the environment. It is obvious, however, that the different kinds of obligations, especially obligations to the employer and the public, or to the employer and the environment, may conflict. Here, however, Markel backtracks to a "semantic" position, reminding students that "[p]erhaps the simplest and strongest [ethical] guideline is to tell the facts honestly and accurately" (p. 41). Markel readily acknowledges that employees may be under pressure to compromise one or more of their conflicting obligations, but, he tells students, "[y]our responsibility is to resist this pressure" (p. 41).

Legal Ethics

Such difficulties in theorizing and formalizing ethical responses to the always dynamic and complex problems of real workplace situations lead many teachers to marginalize ethical issues or even question their relevance to teaching technical communication. To many teachers, ethics means primarily liability issues that affect the work of technical communicators: warnings and safety labels, product liability issues, disclosure requirements, and litigation. (See the special 1987 issue of *IEEE Transactions on Technical Communication*, devoted to safety and liability issues.) This approach consciously separates moral from strictly legal and technical issues since, as Lee Schimberg (1980) has argued,

> legal constraints imposed on technical communicators are infinitely simpler to deal with than are moral constraints. Legal restraints are rather clearly defined, whereas moral constraints result from (the degrees of) fine tuning of one's own judgement and conscience. (p. 11)

The triple separation between legal issues of communication and the problematics of "judgement and conscience," and the assumption that as discourse becomes presumably more "objective" it also becomes more "impersonal" (as well as perhaps the sheer frustration with the complexities of the issue) have led some teachers to argue that, while ethics is indeed of critical importance to the conduct of human affairs, it does not belong in the technical communication classroom. Typical of this position is the view of William Evans (1981), who has suggested that "English teachers, well-intentioned though they are, may not have sufficient information to make ethical judgments on questions of ethics in technical areas" (qtd. in Doheny-Farina, 1989, p. 67). However, as Eugene Garver (1985) has argued, avoidance of explicit discussion of ethical and moral concerns in a writing class does not make the class, or the instruction, value-free or morally neutral.

The demarcations on which all of the preceding "external" approaches to ethics depend, between, on the one hand, the domain of ethics (which then becomes a matter of appropriate specialized training or the provenance of—mostly technical or managerial in practice—expertise) and, on the other hand, the problem of language (the domain of English teachers) becomes possible only if one makes certain assumptions about language, reality, truth, and personal agency. Such assumptions, however, have been problematized by postmodern and rhetorical approaches to technical communication ethics, approaches that are "internal" in the sense that they regard ethical issues as intrinsic to the problems of words, to any use of language.

Postmodern Ethics

To maintain either the unproblematic connection between moral intent and communicative action implicit in "semantic" approaches to ethics, or the equally unproblematic separation between the two implicit in philosophical and legal approaches to ethics or in denials of the importance of ethics altogether, one has to assume that language is capable of undistorted transmission of information—a view that Carolyn Miller (1979) has criticized as the "windowpane" theory of language. The "windowpane" (or "transfer") view regards language as an instrument for transferring meaning from a speaker or writer to a listener or reader. The speaker or writer "encodes" a meaning (intention, decision, information, data) in a message that the listener or reader then decodes. In this view, the relationship between intentions or actions on the one hand and words on the other is relatively simple: language expresses meaning and describes actions or facts. To be an ethical technical communicator, therefore, means to have the right information or knowledge, the honesty or training to act morally and to speak or write truthfully, and the literacy skills to do it clearly and precisely.

While these may be necessary conditions for ethical communication, they are clearly not sufficient. Otherwise, "trusting the engineer's word" amounts, in the final resort, to a trust in language. However, words, as we well know, can be notoriously unreliable, often in spite of the best intentions of those who utter them. In real life, the relationship between intentions, knowledge, and language may be far from straightforward. Facts may not exist apart from the eye and mind of the observer and reporter of events and from the context within which they become relevant or known. And integrity may be bound up with words in ways that may make ethical choices difficult and unclear, as "postmodern" theorists such as Dorothy Winsor, Lester Faigley, James Porter, and others have argued.

In her discussion of the decision-making process preceding the launch of the Space Shuttle *Challenger*, Dorothy Winsor (1990) has shown that what constitutes relevant "knowledge" may differ, depending on one's organizational role, current agendas, and the nature of the problem at hand. Thus, what constituted valid knowledge for *Challenger* engineers may have differed from what was most salient for managers or NASA officials. As a result, the debate on whether to launch the *Challenger,* while ostensibly revolving around technical matters, actually showed the extent to which those matters are contextualized through different interpretive frameworks and conflicting conceptual networks.

"Postmodern" approaches to technical communication ethics argue, therefore, that in practical situations, ethical communicative action is inevitably complicated by epistemological, rhetorical, semiotic, and linguistic issues. Such approaches invert the relationship between ethics and language; while semantic, philosophical, or legal ethics assumes that language is instrumental in relation to (ethical) intention, postmodern approaches to ethics suggest that ethical issues arise also—and perhaps most critically—at the intersection of intention and language, as well as of world and language. According to Lester Faigley (1992):

> In the traditional view of the relationship between rhetoric and ethics, ethical values preexist rhetoric. Rhetoric in the traditional view becomes the means to persuade people to be ethical. In a postmodern theory of rhetoric, there is no legitimate preexisting discourse of values for rhetoric to convey. Ethics becomes the responsibility of linking phrases. (p. 237)

The "responsibility of linking phrases" involves continual, active questioning and critique of the cultural, technical, political, and other blandishments that may blunt awareness and compel acquiescence. For James Porter (1993):

> Ethics in the postmodern sense...does not refer to a static body of foundational principles, laws, and procedures; it is not to be confused with particular moral codes or with particular sets of statements about what is appropriate or inappropriate behavior or practice. Ethics is not a set of answers but a mode of questioning and a manner of positioning. That questioning certainly involves principles—but it always involves mediating between competing principles and judging those principles in light of particular circumstances. Ethics is decision making—but it is decision making that involves question and critique. It is informed, critical, and pluralistic decision making. (p. 218)

Thus, postmodern approaches to ethics in technical communication resist the implicit universalism and foundationalism of traditional approaches. According to Porter (1993), they "view ethics not so much as a set of fundamental and abstract principles to be applied to situations but as a process of inquiry necessarily tried to the act of composing" (p. 208). Porter quotes Charles Scott (1990), who sees the foundation of postmodern ethics in

> a continuing process of thinking that diagnoses, criticizes, clarifies by means of questions, destructures the components of meaning and power that silently shape our lives together, and also questions the values and concepts that have rule-governing and axiomatic power in our culture. (p. 218)

Therefore, for Porter and other postmodernists, "every act of writing involves ethical questioning. Given this view, ethics is not just a matter of the occasional problematic episode. Ethics, like audience, is a factor in every rhetorical act" (1993, p. 224).

Rhetorical Ethics

In recent years, it has been increasingly widely recognized that all communication is a form of action in specific social contexts. Texts do not merely communicate information; they also do things in the world of organized human action. Charles Bazerman's (1988) position is representative of recent trends in technical communication scholarship. "Writing," says Bazerman, "is a form of social action; texts help organize social activities and social structure; and reading is a form of social participation..." (p. 10). As much recent scholarship has shown, technical communication has the power to affect material and social outcomes, "rhetorical power," to use Steven Mailloux's (1989) memorable term. In the case of technical texts, this rhetorical power includes at least some share in shaping emerging technologies, marketing technical products, garnering funds for projects, wooing investors, regulating procedures and processes, and shaping both our knowledge of and relationship to the material world. A serious consideration of ethics in technical communication cannot be separated from a consideration of the extent and implications of this power; it must include an examination of the varied deployments of technical discourse and their consequences.

The rhetorical perspective on ethics in technical communication thus begins by considering the various contexts in which the engineer may write or speak and in which we "take the engineer's word" and then raise broader questions about the kinds of things this "word" does and the potential consequences and implications of this doing. The three major contexts in which technical communication may be said to do the sorts of things that may have significant ethical implications are in relation to technology; in the arena of public debate, controversy, and policymaking; and in the context of organizations and institutions, primarily in terms of organizational decision making. I will discuss the ethical aspects of technical communication in each of these contexts in turn.

ETHICS, TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION, AND TECHNOLOGY

Recent research has begun to show that technical communication has a rich and complex relationship to technology and its products. Technical information and documentation has been shown to play important roles in marketing the initial concept and design (Ornatowski 1998); creating a need for the technology (Ornatowski, 1998); shaping the design (Bucciarelli, 1994; Latour, 1996; Mack, 1990; MacKenzie, 1990; Ornatowski, 1998; Pinch & Bijker, 1987); inserting the technology into conceptual and cultural frameworks (Doheny-Farina, 1992; Latour, 1996; Pinch & Bijker, 1987); certifying technologies and technical artifacts as usable or safe (Nelkin, 1979; Paradis, 1991); and training potential users.

In each of these roles, technical communication may, directly or indirectly, have ethical implications. One could ask, for example, "What needs does a given communication help to create and what may be the implications of satisfying or not satisfying these needs? What is the role of technical documentation and information in the evolving design and what are the potential implications (social, cultural, political, safety) of the different design alternatives? What is the role of technical documentation in marketing a technology or a technical artifact and what are the implications of deploying the technology or the artifact? What social or cultural changes may accompany the insertion of a technology and what may be the implications of those changes? To what uses may technologies be put and what may be their effects? How safe is a given technology and how is this safety represented in accompanying technical documents?"

Each of these questions raises at once issues of ethics and of relative ethical responsibility of technical communication and communicators. Asking them is merely an acknowledgment of two realizations that should be relatively obvious today: that "technical" communication involves more than simple transmission of "technical" data (although even such transmission may have ethical implications) and that purveyors of information are not without complicity in the general enterprise of technology and in the development, deployment, and consequences of specific technologies and artifacts. Steven Katz (1992) has argued eloquently against separating even seemingly strictly "technical" information from larger technical and nontechnical frameworks and purposes that it may serve; his analysis of the Nazi memo on the technical problems of gas chamber vehicles clearly shows the moral complicity (albeit not necessarily a willing one) of the writer and his document in the larger enterprise of the Holocaust.

ETHICS, TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION, AND PUBLIC DEBATE

In Western culture today, technical expertise and information are important, if not decisive, factors in public debates and public decision making. Discussions about such issues as nuclear power, hazardous waste storage, ozone depletion, acid rain, global warming, or abortion involve technical or scientific data as much as emotional and political argumentation. In fact, the different strands are difficult to separate, since it is the political or emotional engagements that endow technical data with salience (for instance, if one is against centralized power systems, one is more likely to bring up studies of the consequences of exposure to force fields created by power lines; if one is against nuclear power, one is more likely to marshal data that shows the potential consequences of high temperatures on containment systems).

In her analysis of the major public controversies of recent years, Dorothy Nelkin (1979) shows the pivotal role played by technical expertise (and, what follows, technical discourse and documentation) in public issues large and small, as well as the essentially political character of ostensibly "technical" choices. She argues that while public controversies such as those over nuclear safety, effects of acid rain, automobile safety, or location of airports and power plants may appear to concern primarily technical questions, "in the end, they involve political choices from among competing social values" (p. 14). That leads her to note what she sees as "a troubling feature of contemporary society": that "deference to technical knowledge enables those with specialized competence to exert a powerful influence" on public decision making and may obscure the more qualitative and subjective questions of value and other human considerations. She worries that in the end, "the power afforded to those who control technical information can threaten democratic principles, reducing public control over many public policy choices" (p. 14).

In a similar vein, Stanley Aronowitz (1988) has argued that in our culture, "the achievements of science and technology are invested with the mantle of absolute truth, the products of experts," who then become the "final arbiters "in many critical social debates and controversies (p. 47). Their participation often obscures the real nature of such debates, which, at bottom, may not be about science or technology, but about power, resources, access, social relations, and other essentially social, human, and political issues.

In their analysis of a controversy surrounding a public works project in New Mexico, Patricia Hynds and Wanda Martin (1995) have argued that "[t]he public decision-making arena is not a technical space in which clarity, precision, and superior data will always carry the day, but a political and ethical space, in which people seek...a sense of the power to affect their own futures" (p. 145). In view of that, Hynds and Martin suggest that

> a truly ethical approach to professional communication in public policy contexts would...need to recognize the political and cultural contexts in which each issue is embedded; take a more contingent view of data; recognize and acknowledge the interests of all parties, the communicators as well as the other participants; and be open to a wider discussion of values than the project at hand might seem to dictate. (p. 140)

The notion of public debate as both a "political and ethical space" broadens the ethical obligations of technical communicators. As in some sense professional rhetoricians of science and technology, technical communicators have to be aware of the full demands of the rhetorical situations in which they find themselves and of the different sorts of issues and complexities involved, with their rich potential for ethical concerns.

ETHICS, TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION, AND ORGANIZATIONAL DECISION MAKING

As Gareth Morgan (1986) has suggested, organizations are in large measure "decision making systems" (p. 167). Technical information is a factor in organizational decision making and technical communication has a role in organizational deliberations. The exact extent of that role is not clear, however. Much of what we know about it comes from discussions of what is perhaps the paradigmatic instance of organizational decision making involving technical information: the Space Shuttle *Challenger* case. The voluminous literature on the *Challenger* case provides a virtual case study in approaches to technical communication ethics and their practical implications.

Arthur Walzer and Alan Gross (1994) have compared the competing analyses of the *Challenger* case. Their discussion is worth considering in more detail, since it not only summarizes the major approaches to communication ethics in terms of their ability to explain what occurred in actual organizational deliberation, but also reveals a problem that may indicate a need for a different perspective altogether.

Deliberations of whether or not to launch the *Challenger* involved technical issues (the final technically indeterminate question of the safety of the O-rings) and nontechnical issues (flight schedule, cost, public relations issues), as well as the different agendas and expectations of the various parties, including internal groups such as engineers and managers and the various participating institutions. The fact that after extensive deliberations the *Challenger* was launched to its fiery demise is widely regarded as an emblematic failure in organizational decision making. Walzer and Gross see possible explanations for this failure as falling into three groups: positivistic, postmodern, and rhetorical.

The positivistic explanations assume the "windowpane" view of language and the "transfer" view of communication, as well as the possibility of factual knowledge about the O-rings (they thus correspond to what I call "semantic" ethics). These approaches thus see the causes of the failure in incomplete technical knowledge of O-ring behavior (if engineers knew for sure how O-rings would behave, the facts would constitute a basis for a decision) and in breakdowns in communication caused by such factors as poorly written memos, selective listening, failure to attend to information, ignoring evidence, and intimidating communication styles (Arnold & Malley, 1988; Gouran, Hirokawa, & Martz, 1986; Winsor, 1988). The ultimate causes of the failure, according to the positivists, lie therefore in personal irresponsibility and failures of judgment that made these breakdowns possible.

Postmodern explanations question the possibility and persuasive efficacy of definitive factual knowledge and the conception of communication as transmission of information. Instead, they argue that knowledge, as well as communication, are subject to the vagaries of interpretation: what counts as knowledge (and as relevant data or "facts") varies depending on the professional interests, backgrounds, and organizational roles of participants (thus, what counts as relevant knowledge or as important facts for engineers may differ from what is salient for project managers); in addition, language is not an unproblematic medium of communication, but its meanings both shape and are shaped by the conceptual networks, assumptions, and goals of participants (Herndl, Fennell, & Miller, 1991; Winsor, 1990). The postmodernists thus see the causes of the failure in the inability of participants to overcome their contingent interpretations of and responses to data and each other's arguments.

Walzer and Gross (1994) see both the positivistic and postmodern approaches as antirhetorical and therefore inadequate to offer an ethically responsible way of dealing with decision-making situations such as that faced by *Challenger* managers and engineers. The positivistic position, they argue, makes rhetoric unnecessary: facts can speak for themselves; people can understand each other and make up their minds rationally on the basis of available information, if only they try to keep their ears, minds, and channels of communication open, report all the relevant facts, and care to act responsibly. On the other hand, the postmodern position makes rhetoric impossible. Data does not speak for itself; it needs to be spoken for. However, the same data may mean different things to different people. Since their interpretive frameworks and filters differ and no commonly acceptable grounds for ethical action are available, people will always communicate and argue at cross purposes.

As an alternative, Walzer and Gross (1994) suggest that Aristotelian rhetoric offers the best explanation for what happened in the *Challenger* case and the most productive framework for guiding ethical decision making in organizational contexts. They see two kinds of knowledge as necessary to guide decisions in cases such as the launch of the *Challenger*: "technical knowledge" and "normative knowledge." If, as happened in the *Challenger* case, "factual [technical] knowledge is not achieved and decision and action are still required, people must deliberate to discover the normative knowledge that should guide action" (p. 427). The purpose of such rhetorical deliberation is to "discover the best available reasons [for action], Aristotle's probable truth" (p. 426). Walzer and Gross see the cause of the disaster in the failure of this kind of deliberative process: "[t]he managers from Thiokol who overruled their engineers stand condemned not for their failure to recommend that the launch be delayed, but for their failure to respect the deliberative process in reaching their managerial decision" (p. 430). However, Walzer and Gross are not certain why this failure of the deliberative process occurred. They speculate that it had to do with the shifting of the burden of proof, from the traditional NASA presumption that a launch is not safe until proven so beyond reasonable doubt to the opposite, a presumption in favor of launching on schedule. Why such a shift occurred, however, they do not know.

SYSTEMIC ETHICS: ETHICS IN THE WORKPLACE AND THE PROBLEM OF AGENCY

The failure of the deliberative process in the *Challenger* case may signal a problem that complicates any theorizing about ethics and that confronts any teacher who would make ethics a central issue in a technical writing class: the problem of agency. Most discussions of ethics are rooted in the twin legacies of classical rhetoric and Christian moral thought. Aristotelian rhetoric is a theory of rational deliberation among social equals (one might add, in a homogenous culture) who are free to raise all reasonable arguments and free to debate all questions. Traditional philosophical thought about ethics assumes a free and conscious individual agent with the power to influence outcomes, a moral agent with the capacity to, as Lee Thayer (1973) has put it, think and act "on-its-own-behalf." Thayer articulates this requirement eloquently:

> [T]he primary condition for "ethical" communication is that individuals can and do express themselves and understand others on-behalf-of-themselves, and not on-behalf-of the various social institutions within which they have been in-formed. What this implies is that an expression, to be ethical, must emit

> from an individual who has consciously self-examined those beliefs and ideologies (those communicational realities) with which he has been in-formed, or by which he might in-form himself, given the highest and noblest ends which he might conceive for himself. (p. 354)

Such an ideal of autonomy for the deliberative act and of agency for those who deliberate cannot perhaps be assumed in contemporary institutional contexts. While modern organizations indeed do constitute "decision-making systems," the motivations, value systems, and structures of authority constitutive of these systems offer relatively limited scope to individual intentions, even the best ones, or to the deliberative process in the traditional sense.

Jurgen Ruesch (1973) has offered a somewhat cynical but nevertheless disturbingly recognizable view of the institutional moral contexts in which most technical communicators work and most professionals communicate:

> The [modern organizational] world is structured around systems, and people are subordinated to these systems. Territoriality is collective, discontinuous in time and space; technology is largely subservient to the requirements of the machines; laws have been replaced by regulations defining collective responsibility; and control is oriented towards keeping the whole system working. (p. 6)

In such contexts, the "dominance of the machine and its handmaiden, the human organization," changes how we see and interpret our behavior:

> Thus, psychological interpretations of human behavior gave way to the social emphasis, and personal leadership was replaced by impersonal administration. Life-long roles are giving way to time- and situation-bound roles; and the notion of personal identity has given way to the concept of organizational identity.... [T]he solo operator is vanishing, and teamwork or machines are taking his place. As the person loses importance, laws that were based on the principle of individual responsibility become less relevant. From a world governed by principle we are moving to a world governed by contract and mutual agreement, always under the supervision of big brother—the government. This state of affairs introduces bureaucratic procedures into the life of business and the profession; individual responsibility is being replaced by collective responsibility; considerations of past tradition are sacrificed to technical planning; and truth is neglected in favor of the image. (p. 7)

Perhaps the most important implication of this state of affairs is that, as Ruesch astutely observes, "the functions of perception, decision-making, and action are no longer contiguous in one individual but are distributed among many people and machines" (p. 7). The message is separated from individuals. "Because information now may be worked over by dozens of people, its integrity is suspect and no one expects a statement emanating from an organization or institution to be accurate or truthful" (p. 8). In this way, Ruesch suggests that

> a new morality has been created. What is technically possible and what is economically feasible have come to be identified as good. Efficiency and cost accounting thus have replaced human ideals. "Right," then, is what authorizes expenditures, increases sales, builds more machines, and elects to office; but nobody feels responsible for any untoward effects that such activities may have upon people. (p. 9)

Ruesch wrote these words in 1969, and one may disagree with some of the more extreme aspects of his vision or with his, as we might call it today, implicit logocentrism and foundationalism. However, his account succeeds in capturing at least some of the major difficulties and complexities of communicating in the kinds of institutional worlds in which most of my own technical communication students have worked or are likely to work.

To make things even more difficult, most technical communicators work in strictly delimited capacities, where they may not know, or appreciate, the larger meanings or implications of what they do or say and where their influence on important decisions, including decisions concerning what and even how to communicate, is severely curtailed. As Charles Campbell (1995) has observed, very accurately in my own experience, "those who are supposed to turn out the prose—writers and editors—are often the people with the least influence in shaping the message" (p. 137). Anyone who has worked and communicated in professional environments knows that certain things cannot be said, certain ideas will not fly, and certain arguments and interpretations will not wash no matter how well they may be meant, how reasonably they may be presented, or what noble warrants may be used to support them (even if one did want to risk one's career or position in advancing them—witness what happened to Roger Boisjoly, the whistleblower in the *Challenger* case, still jobless, isolated, and embittered; see Boisjoly, 1987).

The problem of agency and the complexities of contemporary technologized and fragmented organizational life complicate any discussion of ethics in the technical writing classroom. Industry- or government-savvy students will be quick to point out the idealizations in any approach to ethics. I myself have found as yet no perfectly convincing way to reconcile what I preach with what I know about the realities of corporate and organizational life and especially of the actual work of technical communicators. Like many teachers, I find myself caught between the horns of a dilemma. Wendell Berry (1985) has accused technical writing teachers of teaching writing which is "at the service and the mercy of expedient aims" (p. 216). As a remedy, he advocates teaching a language that is "required to tell the truth—whatever the urgings of purposes, audiences, and situation" (p. 213). I find it hard to imagine a real use of language that is beyond the "urgings of purposes, audiences, and situation." Any such use would lie outside of a concrete rhetorical situation and would at best be irrelevant (like "semantic" ethics) and at worst incomprehensible. On the other hand, Mike Markel (1996) advises students that under the pressure of conflicting obligations their "responsibility is to resist this pressure" (p. 41). The "just say no" solution is not satisfactory or realistic either.

Some more comprehensive and radical approach to ethics is needed to reconcile our awareness of the complexities and stakes attendant on scientific and technical decision making in real environments with the emerging sense of the ethical potential of technical communication and communicators.

ETHICS AND THE TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION PARADIGM

It may be that the problem lies with the way technical communication is conceptualized. Perhaps the current technical communication paradigm, which underlies both the way it is taught and the way it is practiced in the workplace, is simply not conducive to broadly conceived ethical questioning and ethical action. As Alfred Smith (1973) once noted, an ethic is always grounded in an ideology and a metaphysic.

The current technical communication paradigm grew out of English, communication, information science, and document design, with strong elements of cognitive problem solving (but not ethical problem solving), cognitive text (and increasingly visual text as well) processing, and rhetorical theory (mostly conceived in terms of informational and persuasive efficacy). It is a paradigm that might perhaps best be described as information design, based on the metaphor of technical communication as a form of "bridging" or mediation and on seeing technical communicators as professionals whose extensive training and knowledge (in writing, psychology, graphic design, technology, industrial design, educational technology, information and decision science, management, and so on) help them design information to most effectively serve specific "user" needs.

While this paradigm has been extremely productive in improving the quality of technical documentation over the least 15 years or so and in professionalizing technical communication and technical communicators, it has few provisions for developing what Geoffrey Vickers (1973) has called the "appreciative system," the system of value, or rather the system by which people assign value. Vickers distinguishes systems of value from principles that guide action in a purely instrumental sense, which he calls "readiness-to-do." Steven Katz (1992) has warned eloquently of the dangers of this kind of separation, of what happens when discourse is detached from human values, reason, and feeling and reduced to technical and formal imperatives, when it becomes identified, in effect, with "readiness-to-do." The resulting "ethic of expediency," Katz argues, has contributed as much as apathy, fear, and hatred to the complicity of millions in the Nazi program of mass extermination. "Technical writing," Katz suggests, "perhaps more than other kinds of rhetorical discourse, always leads to action, and thus always impacts on human life; in technical writing, epistemology necessarily leads to ethics" (p. 259).

Today, as our world changes and we face increasingly serious and complex environmental, social, and other problems, as technologies get more complicated and their potential to impact human life (for better or worse) grows while social control of technology weakens, we may be in need of a new paradigm for the "rhetoric of the world of work." Such a paradigm should be motivated by an ethic to fit the measure of the challenges we face in our world and our workplaces and based on the realization that in technical communication "epistemology necessarily leads to ethics." The foundations for such a paradigm have already begun to emerge, not just in technical communication, but also in such disciplines as philosophy of technology.

In an award-winning essay, Johnson-Eilola (1996) has criticized the prevailing epistemology of technical communication. Although his critique is not focused specifically on ethics, it has clear ethical implications. Johnson-Eilola calls the current paradigm the "support model," in which communication is secondary, subordinate to industrial, mostly technological, products. Such perception causes technical communicators to "systematically define [their] work in limited ways" (p. 261). Most importantly, from the ethical standpoint, the "decontextualized, functionalist" thinking fostered by the support model "prevents consideration of sociopolitical terms" (p. 262) in communicative activity; "As long as technical communication is defined in decontextualized, functional ways," Johnson-Eilola argues, "thinking in terms of broad systems is virtually prohibited" (p. 261).

To replace the "support model," Johnson-Eilola (1996) suggests that technical communicators "reinvent" their work in "symbolic-analytic" terms. The "symbolic-analytic" framework "inverts the relationship between technical product and knowledge product": within this framework, "knowledge attains primary value" (pp. 255–256). "Symbolic-analytic work mediates between the functional necessities of usability and efficiency while not losing sight of the larger rhetorical and social contexts in which users work and live" (p. 246) and of "broader and more complicated concerns" (p. 259). As an example, Johnson-Eilola points to the user manual, which is typically conceived as a document that is secondary, instrumental, and subordinate to a technical artifact. Within the new framework, however, Johnson-Eilola suggests, we might begin to see that "[r]ather than...supporting the use of a tool, the manual helps a user create conditions in which he or she undertakes more general forms of work" (p. 251). "As we shift the value of technical communication away from discreet technological products and toward contextualized communication," Johnson-Eilola concludes, "the social aspects of technological use are more amenable to critique and change" (p. 262).

Langdon Winner (1995) provides an example of just such an attempt to shift communication away from technological products and toward broader contextual issues in order to critique and change the prevailing assumptions underlying technology in general and specific artifacts in particular. Winner describes work carried out in the 1980s by the Center for Public Life, a research institute in Stockholm, Sweden. The goal of the Center is to create citizen roles in relation to technological planning and decision making, realms in which, as Winner observes critically, private calculations of efficiency, effectiveness, cost, and profit normally rule the day. In one of the Center's projects, the UTOPIA project of the early 1980s, workers in the Swedish newspaper industry joined with representatives from management, government, unions, and with university computer scientists to design a new system of computerized graphics for newspaper layout and typesetting. The first phase of the project was a survey of current work practices, techniques, and training in the graphics industry. The second phase was to consider possibilities for a new system. Finally, a 48-page report was produced that gave design specifications for new graphics software.

Winner describes the resulting pilot system, installed in a Stockholm daily paper, as offering

> a pattern of hardware, software, and human relationship very different from what would have been produced by managers and engineers alone. It allows graphics workers considerable latitude in arranging texts and images, retaining many of their traditional skills, but realizing them in a computerized form. (p. 79)

The most notable feature of the project was that it successfully addressed some of the most troubling features of contemporary culture of technology and of ordinary hierarchical and structured organizational decision making: the dominance of managerial imperatives; the dominance of technical imperatives and technical expertise over human considerations and concerns; lack of broader community participation and consensus; the secondariness of ethical considerations. The work on the project was collaborative and the lack of technical (computer) expertise on the part of concerned workers or others did not prevent their voices from being heard—in fact, from being central. Strictly technical expertise was considered secondary, subservient to the human needs the technology was to serve. The technical requirements were derived from the principle that, as one project member and computer scientist observed, "the equipment should serve as *tools for skilled work* and for production of *good use quality products*" (original emphasis, qtd. in Winner, 1995, p. 79). Interestingly, the group rejected an American firm's software product because, as Winner put it, "it contained deep entrenched forms of hierarchical organization, features that the group found 'anti-democratic and de-skilling'" (p. 81). Winner concludes that "[i]n a small and tentative manner, the UTOPIA project created a public space for the political deliberation about the qualities of an emerging technical artifact, [a space] predicated on modifying the right of owners of private property to have exclusive or even primary control of the shape of new technologies that affect how others live" (p. 79), a space that provides one alternative to "the absurd logic of efficiency, productivity, and control that now drives technological choices in the global economy" (p. 82).

What is most notable about the project in the present context is that it involved technical communication in the best sense of the term, a sense that comes close to engaging a much richer spectrum of ethical obligations and responsibilities for technical communicators then is typical in their traditional workplace roles and contexts.

The example of the UTOPIA project shows that as the technical communication paradigm shifts away from the focus on informational efficacy and toward consideration of the wider "social aspects of technological use," including a consideration of the impact of technology and technical decision making on "how others live," the ethical responsibilities of technical communicators—their responsibilities for the "word"—change as well, in keeping with what we are beginning to know about the world-making (both work-world and life-world) potential of words. This change raises the question of ethical horizons: If not in the name of economic or communicative efficiency or in the purely instrumental and contingent interests of their employers, then in the name of what should technical communicators engage their technical and rhetorical skills?

Carolyn Miller (1989) has suggested an answer. The key concept in her approach is the classical notion of "phronesis": prudence, judgment, or practical wisdom. According to Miller, technical communication constitutes a "practical rhetoric" that should focus on "arguing in a prudent way toward the good of the community rather than [on] constructing texts" (p. 23). Prudential reasoning mediates between the "technical" imperatives of efficiency and effectiveness and the diversity of human individual and communal interests; it provides "a locus for questioning, criticism, for distinguishing good practice from bad" (p. 23). This locus is "not the individual or any particular set of private interests but the human community that is created through conduct...not the working group or the corporation but the larger community within which the corporation sells its products, pays taxes, hires employees, lobbies, issues stock, files lawsuits, and is itself accountable to the law" (p. 23). For Miller, an ethical approach to technical communication should therefore be grounded in a theory of good reasons for deliberations involving, on the one hand, the recalcitrancies and imperatives of technology, the market, and the contingent interests of the participants, and, on the other hand, the larger social and political considerations.

The UTOPIA project provides an example of deliberation in a concrete context that includes both specific (newspaper workers) and larger communities (computer programmers and manufacturers, newspaper producers and readers, managers, and families) with diverse interests, as well as the imperatives of technology (the logic of computer technologies and graphic systems) and the market (the newspaper market). As this example shows, in concrete instances the abstract ethical and rhetorical horizon of the "good of the community" becomes a matter of concrete communities and considerations, with one of the major tasks of the technical communicator to interpret, mediate, and facilitate the successful negotiation of interests of the diverse communities in relation to emergent technologies, environmental and social impacts, and other issues. In this way, ethical technical communication becomes, at its best, an important (if not absolutely critical) component in democratic decision making in arenas involving science and technology.

CONCLUSION

Teachers of technical communication are just beginning to figure out how to accommodate ethical issues in their teaching. For some, ethics is still a peripheral concern compared with the technical issues of document design and informational effectiveness. For other teachers, ethical concerns loom as central, but by and large this centrality has not yet found adequate theoretical, let alone pedagogical or curricular, expression.

The problem of the location and scope of ethics in the "rhetoric of the world of work" is complicated by the multifaceted involvements of that rhetoric: with the mechanical and instrumental particularities and recalcitrancies of technology and the formal logics of the technical; with the political and social complexities of organizational life; with the economic enterprise of business; with the requirements of the law; with the interests of the diverse communities served by technology and communication; with the realm of cultural and human values; and with the symbolic and epistemic complexities of language. Each of these involvements presents potential ethical implications for technical communicators. Technical communication thus involves ethics in many ways and at many levels. No conception of ethics may be sufficient to account for this complexity or provide ethical guidance in practical situations.

The new STC "Ethical Guidelines for Technical Communicators" (1997) begin to acknowledge some of these complexities. The guidelines are organized into separate sections which address such general issues as legality, honesty, confidentiality, quality, fairness, and professionalism. Among other provisions, the guidelines urge technical communicators to "seek to promote the public good," "provide truthful and accurate communications," "alert clients and employers when [they] believe material is ambiguous," "serve the business interests of [their] clients and employers, as long as such loyalty does not require [them] to violate the public good," and "avoid conflicts of interest in the fulfillment of [their] professional responsibilities and activities." The guidelines thus make a clear attempt to address specific loci of ethical problems and to do so in a way that avoids some of the "semantic" simplifications of the old STC Code. Most interestingly and significantly, the guidelines take the "public good" as their rhetorical and ethical horizon. Still, the gesture remains merely symbolic for now; the guidelines do not really help technical communicators negotiate between the demands of this public good and the palpably concrete pressures exerted by the powerful technologies, institutions, and customers they serve.

For those scholars and teachers who are serious about ethics, the major challenge may be to develop a workable (and teachable) framework to foster responsibility for words that realistically takes into account the conditions under which professionals make decisions and communicate; the multiple (and often conflicting) contexts in which they act and which exert their (again often contradictory) claims on their attention and loyalty; the impersonality of the "systems" in which actors operate and which to a large extent determine their agendas and options; and the difficulties and complexities presented by the vagaries of language, interpretation, and epistemology.

The search for such a framework must begin with the realization that one's conception of ethics is always intimately connected to one's conception of technical communication. The first step may be renewed inquiry into, and a critique of, prevailing practices and assumptions, an ethically motivated rethinking of the current technical communication paradigm. To put it plainly, the challenge may be not to come up with a conception of ethics to fit technical communication, but to reconceptualize technical communication—its practice and teaching—along ethical lines. Otherwise, ethics will remain, in spite of much good faith and ferverent protestations to the contrary, a peripheral and haphazard business, only tangentially related to other, more important business of the technical communication classroom and workplace.

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part III

Ethics and the Profession

chapter 9

A Conflict of Personal and Institutional Ethics: Writing Instruction and Composition Scholarship

Mary Trachsel
University of Iowa

WORK ETHICS AND GENDER CONFUSION IN COMPOSITION

At a special 1994 CCCC session on the future of the composition profession, Andrea Lunsford posed the question, "When we talk about the femininization of composition, do we mean it as an insult or a compliment?" The issue of composition's allegedly feminine identity is especially charged when contextualized by concerns about the professional status of compositionists. When we refer to composition as a *feminized* field, we are generally talking about transformations in the *teaching* of composition—the shift in emphasis from written product to writing process, the attention to collaboration and sharing, the insistence on respectful response to student texts, and the use of developmental, "student-centered" pedagogies that seek to acknowledge and honor the diverse experiences and language abilities students bring to the classroom. Evidence of composition's emerging *professional* stature, on the other hand, is usually found in signs that the field is departing from its pedagogical origins to assume a disciplinary identity defined by research and *scholarship.* As Ed Corbett noted in 1992, the shift in emphasis from teaching to research in composition is often viewed as an "elevating" transformation. He cites Jane Peterson's 1990 Chair's Address at CCCC as representative of the terms in which compositionists conceptualize their professional progress:

> Since 1963, we as a profession have been engaged in making composition a viable discipline. As signs of our success, we now point to doctoral programs in composition and rhetoric, endowed chairs, the emergence of many new journals in our field (especially in the last 15 years), the growth of this organization [CCCC], the size of meetings such as this convention, the bibliographies, such as Erika Lindemann's *CCCC Bibliography of Composition and Rhetoric* for 1987, a selective bibliography which has 1,813 entries. (p. 26)

Peterson's address goes on to note that despite the professional strides composition has made since 1963, its professional prospects are threatened by standards for academic rank and tenure that have "institutionalized a hierarchy that places teaching far below research and scholarship" (p. 26). Corbett concurs on this claim, lamenting that composition is beset by "a rivalry between the research scholar and the teacher," fostered by an academic reward system that fails to accord "an equality of citizenship for both in the academy" (p. 114). Indeed, an organizing theme at the 1994 CCCC was concern at the diminishing status of undergraduate teaching in a discipline that now boasts some six dozen Ph.D. programs, numerous subdivisions, and a proliferation of professional journals that chart the importance of theory in a field once circumscribed by the practice of classroom teaching. Both David Bartholomae (1994) and Richard Gebhardt (1994), in a session entitled "The Razor's Edge: CCCC in a Brave New World," expressed alarm that the professionalization of composition has produced composition specialists who rarely teach composition classes themselves.

The uncomfortable sense that teaching is gradually disappearing from the professional agenda of composition studies echoes one of the themes of Peter Elbow's (1990) report on the 1987 English Coalition Conference—the concern over a "split" in English studies—not between literature and composition as we have grown to expect, but between teaching and scholarship. "The spirit at the conference reflected a bit more commitment to teaching than to scholarship," Elbow reports in his introduction to *What is English?* It's not that we *lacked* commitment to scholarship," he goes on to explain, "but I sensed a tacit premise that teaching was in more danger than scholarship. That is, the collective concern was more for the future of our students than for the future of scholarship" (p. 5). Elbow's report on a conference designed to address the needs and concerns of English studies as a whole reminds us that the tensions between teaching and research exceed the disciplinary boundaries of composition. They are, in fact, tensions that describe the dynamic of the academic community itself. As Richard Gebhardt noted in his 1994 CCCC address, "Theory and Practice in Composition Studies," the increasing marginalization of teaching in an environment of professionalized composition studies is a predictable outcome of the professionalization process of academe—a process that recognizes scholarly research as the privileged path to respectability in a hierarchically structured cultural institution where teaching is positioned far below scholarship in the division of academic labor.

In this chapter, I will argue that the marginalization and devaluation of teaching in the field of composition can be largely understood by the feminine coding of composition instruction—a coding that conceptualizes the teaching of writing to undergraduates as a form of "women's work." To further explicate the concept of "women's work" and the ethic by which it is governed, I invoke the texts of one strand of feminist philosophy, which proposes that "feminine" ethical development is guided by an ideal of care, or interpersonal responsibility. The cultural assumptions about "feminine" identity outlined in this body of work suggest that to the extent that composition instruction manifests an ethic of care and interpersonal connectedness that positions it within the conceptual framework of "women's work," it is vulnerable to the forms of containment and devaluation, both moral and political, that feminist philosophers of care seek to resist. I begin by describing the historical and cultural context of the academy as a work site that has fostered a conceptionally gendered division of academic labor into the separate categories of teaching and scholarship. In order to clarify the ethical structures of women's work, I next present an account of feminist philosophers' articulations of an ethic of care before returning to survey efforts made by various compositionists to assert the validity of a work ethic grounded in care, noting the challenges proponents of a care-based ethic have encountered as they seek to defend and promote the largely "personal" values of "women's work" within a historically patriarchal institution. After examining the political status as well as the moral dimensions of self-proclaimed "feminized" composition pedagogies through the philosophical lens of care, I conclude by endorsing an intersubjective formulation of moral agency in the terms set forth by Jessica Benjamin (1988) and Joan Tronto (1993), and urge composition as a discipline to assert the rights and responsibilities of care and interpersonal connection in the academic workplace.

TEACHING AND SCHOLARSHIP: AN ACADEMIC DIVISION OF LABOR IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Far beyond the discipline of composition, claims that teaching, like service, is a devalued form of academic labor have fueled critiques of the research-based political economy of academe. Prominent among these criticisms is a self-named feminist perspective that sees the academic division of labor as an expression of patriarchal values. One such critique, articulated in Shelley M. Park's "Research, Teaching and Service: Why Shouldn't Women's Work Count?" (1996), examines how an ideology of gender differences influences current tenure and promotion criteria in American universities. Park reports that these criteria "reflect and perpetuate masculine values and practices" (p. 47), structuring a system in which "research is implicitly deemed 'men's work' and is explicitly valued, whereas teaching and service are characterized as 'women's work' and explicitly devalued" (p. 47). The continuities Park perceives as uniting academic and patriarchal value systems have been widely noted (see, for example, Glazer, Bensimon, and Townsend's 1993 collection of essays in *Women in Higher Education: A Feminist Perspective*) and appear to have deep historical roots. David Noble (1992) maintains that the Judeo-Christian cultural ideal of "a world without women" has impelled the development of the Western academy from its monastic origins in the Middle Ages, institutionalizing a work ethic that equates masculinity with intellect and spirit, separate from and elevated over femininity, emotion, and body. From these origins, scholarship developed philosophically as a masculine quest for truth and wisdom, a quest undertaken by the philosopher's hero, the Man of Reason. Within the institutional structures first implanted in the academy by the monastic hierarchy of the church in the Middle Ages, scholarship eventually came to be deemed a separate function from teaching, a clear departure from the Socratic model of wisdom, in which teacher and philosopher were united in one man.

In the 19th century, Cardinal Newman (1957) made explicit the conceptual split between scholarship and teaching by stipulating separate workforces of scholars and teachers to carry out his idea of a university. Although the teachers and scholars Newman envisioned were all men, the work of the teacher, as he described it, incorporates qualities that have traditionally been associated with the work of women, notably an overriding concern for the welfare and development of younger, less experienced others and an acceptance of the interruptable time that accompanies accountability to these others. Newman's job description for teachers removed them from both the responsibilities and privileges of scholarship. "He who spends his day in dispensing knowledge to all comers," Newman wrote of the teacher, "is unlikely to have either the leisure or energy to acquire new" (p. 358). Scholars, on the other hand, were to undertake the pursuit of "new" knowledge largely in solitude. Newman's idea of scholarship implied workers who require "seclusion and quiet" for the fulfillment of their gifts and who are often "too intent upon their subjects to admit of interruption" (p. 358). For these reasons, those whom Newman describes as "the greatest thinkers" throughout history have "shunned the lecture room and the public school" (p. 358).

Although Newman's "Discourses on the Scope and Nature of University Education" (1957) reflects the thinking of an educational theorist of the previous century, the sense that teaching and scholarship are mutually exclusive academic functions persists today, despite the popularity of claims, usually defensive, that the two functions actually reinforce one another. Like Newman, many present-day academic workers are aware of the competing demands teaching and scholarship place on their time and energy, and the separate identities of teacher and scholar are so sufficiently normalized that we rarely question the division of academic *resumés* into the separate categories of teaching, service, and research. Moreover, a summarized look at the language used to describe academic work both within and outside of the academic community suggests that our conceptual framework for understanding the separate work of scholarship and teaching is indeed gendered, to the extent that scholars are conventionally depicted as heroic figures who embark on metaphorical voyages of exploration and conquest, while the work of teaching is popularly idealized in terms of attentive and nurturant caregiving that resembles the parental responsibilities culturally ascribed to motherhood.

Descriptions of scholars as solitary heroes engaged in exploration and conquest abound in the texts through which academics advertise and market their scholarship to one another. In a recent catalogue of books published by the University of Chicago Press, for instance, a book about the Dalkon Shield bankruptcy "explores the rarified world of modern litigation"; another book is described as a "powerful guide to our modern conception of freedom"; others are represented as "landmark" studies or as works that "break new ground" or "explore unknown territory."[1] Still others, we are assured, will "reopen a path of classical scholarship that others will follow," or will "open the way for a whole new set of discussions." A scholarly work on theology is "a voyage of great discovery"; a book about the construction of sexuality "takes us over vast terrains of historical example and detail"; a book on the hermetic tradition is "an intellectual adventure to read"; other works present "pioneering approaches," "explore border areas," "chart previously unexplored fields of knowledge," "uncover new strata of meaning," "set out to make discoveries" or represent "thoughtful and penetrating explorations."

The familiarity of the scholar-as-hero metaphor renders it virtually invisible, yet its very invisibility suggests how deeply the ideology is embedded in the academic worldview. The scholar is one who ventures far afield into unfamiliar territory. Moreover, the ideal scholar is the *first* to make this journey and is thus, like the hero, set apart or separated from ordinary human experience. It is important for the scholar to be at the "forefront" of "original" research, to be a leader and a guide who "sets new standards," and pushes forward the "cutting edge" of knowledge. Typically, it is the manly attributes of scholars that enable them to accomplish these heroic tasks. Their work is apt to be valued and praised for its "Herculean effort," for its "scholarly rigor." It is a virtue in this sphere of action to be "vigorous and straightforward," "masterful," "ambitious," "challenging," "aggressive," "compelling," and "penetrating."

Academic veneration of these manly virtues reveals the interconnectedness of our notions of heroism, scholarship, and that most masculine of activities, martial combat. And indeed we find that a scholar receives praise for being a "challenging writer who attacks the basic structures upon which knowledge stands," or who "confronts problems," "executes critical maneuvers," "takes a daring stand," "spearheads the dismantling" of a subject, or even "rescues" a subject from such threatening forces as "terminal formalism." Similarly, the work of scholars may "break down barriers to understanding," "unflinchingly confront opposition," "advance arguments," "stand unrivaled," "force readers to reconsider," "stand as a remarkable tour de force," or simply occupy a position with which "all other scholars in the field will have to reckon."

But if scholarly work conforms to the ethical codes of such traditionally masculine activities as exploration and combat, why have we historically referred to our institutions of higher learning in maternal terms? Where does the *alma mater*, the nurturing, bountiful mother fit into this picture? Why are graduates of colleges and universities known as *alumni* and *alumnae*—literally translated, "suckling sons and daughters"?

Unlike her masculine counterpart, the hero, the mythic figure of the *alma mater* is distinguished not by her independence and solitary endeavors, but by her relational identity and her nurturant activity. In *Motherself: A Mythic Analysis of Motherhood*, Kathryn Allen Rabuzzi (1988) describes this cultural icon as a self whose perceptions and actions are dictated by an ethic of care and responsibility toward others. Rabuzzi's "motherself" is thus an *un*differentiated, relational being. "In the kind of selfhood characteristic of a mother," Rabuzzi explains, "the self does not reside simply in the mother. Rather, an interrelationship exists between the mother and child, such that the two together form a kind of interactive two-in-one self" (p. 43).

If the myth of the individuated masculine hero has been appropriated by the discourse of scholarship, the myth of the relational motherself has been appropriated by the discourse of and about teaching. The maternal narrative of nurturant care is especially conspicuous in the texts academic institutions publish to communicate a teaching ideal to students, prospective students, and a public comprised in part of the parents and guardians of students. In the main library of my own university, for instance, photographs of the winners of annually bestowed teaching awards are positioned prominently near the entrance. Introducing these teachers is a picture of the university president accompanied by the printed text of his assurance to readers that just as Iowa prides itself on its accomplishments as a research university, it takes seriously its teaching mission, which the president describes as "the nurturing of young minds."

In a similar spirit, a university brochure sent to prospective applicants asserts that students on campus benefit from "high powered programs in a high care environment" (University of Iowa, n.d., n.p.). Succeeding paragraphs in the brochure make it clear that it is teachers who are primarily responsible for this "high care environment": "At Iowa," the brochure states, "students have found the warm relationships they've developed among faculty members to be a rewarding and lasting enhancement to their education." Elsewhere, students are assured that they can expect "personalized help" from "caring people and programs" that "encourage" the student's academic success. Similar rhetoric dominates the representation of teaching in an admissions booklet entitled *This is Iowa* (1992). Here, "success" is defined as something that can ultimately be measured by "papers published, scholarships earned, and careers launched," and this success is promoted by the "close contact" students can expect to have with their teachers—faculty members who may be "highly regarded internationally in their fields" but are nevertheless "well known (and liked) by their students." "Get to know your professors," the booklet advises students. "Most appreciate the student who comes in periodically with questions" (n.p.).

The University of Iowa, where these texts were produced, is by no means unique in proffering the teaching ideals of receptivity, responsive connectedness, affectionate concern, and nurturant care. In the academy at large, published descriptions of teaching dating back through the decades invoke the image of the *alma mater*, typifying the work of teaching as cultivating the growth of knowledge in the minds of students. Such work necessitates "sensitive awareness of students' intellectual growth" (*Importance of Teaching*, 1968, p. 82) in order to "nurture their growing understanding" (Bennett, 1990, p. 94). The prevalence in this discourse of terms such as "helping," "caring," "sensitive," and "concerned" to characterize the ideal teacher suggests the prominence of affect in the work of teaching. "It is generally agreed," writes Peter Markie (1990) in "Professors, Students, and Friendship," that the best college professors are caring, sensitive persons, whose concern for their students extends beyond the classroom" (p. 34). Allan Carter (1967), in an article entitled "University Teaching and Excellence," makes the maternal metaphor more explicit when he writes that "the student's umbilical cord must be severed upon graduation in any event, and we should take responsibility of playing midwife at an earlier stage" (p. 155). Implicit in Carter's conception of teaching, however, is its conceptual subservience to the heroic narrative of the scholar. Teaching, he writes, necessarily involves "intimacy and personal relationship" if students are to have "a real learning experience" (p. 155). Yet this relational form of learning is merely an anticipatory and immature stage of intellectual development that ideally culminates in an autonomous mode of knowledge acquisition. Once the umbilical cord is cut, the student's learning should no longer require the support of nurturing, interdependent human relationships that, if allowed to continue too long, would render the student, in Carter's words, "a permanent adolescent" (p. 155).

CARE: FEMINIST PHILOSOPHERS EXPLORE THE ETHICS OF "WOMEN'S WORK"

Carter's (1967) suggestion that the maternal model of caring connectedness if continued too long in an academic setting will impede the student's intellectual maturation implies the boundaries within which an ethic of care is academically contained. At some point in students' progress toward full-fledged citizenship in the academic community, they must detach from their teacher/caregivers and forge separate academic identities as "independent thinkers." This understanding of maturation, some feminist philosophers argue, accords with the distinctly masculine model of development encapsulated in the Freudian narrative: the son achieves maturity only when he separates his identity from the mother's in a process known as "individuation," a necessary preliminary to assuming the rights and responsibilities of manhood—the work of the fathers. Theorizing an alternative, feminine model of maturation, some feminist thinkers have begun to examine the developmental course of the daughter, whose detachment from the nurturant mother is only partial because daughters, in developing a gendered identity, are likely to emulate rather than differentiate themselves from the feminine model of adulthood represented by the mother (Chodorow, 1978).

Carol Gilligan's (1982) "different voice" theory, positing a feminine alternative to the Freudian narrative of moral maturation, lays the groundwork upon which some feminist philosophers have constructed an interdependent ethic of care that differs significantly from a traditionally masculine ethic centered in the moral agency of the autonomous individual. Noting that Lawrence Kohlberg's influential study of moral maturation derived its developmental stages from the responses of male college students, Gilligan formulated her notion of a different moral voice out of women's responses to moral dilemmas constructed similarly to those Kohlberg presented to his subjects. While Kohlberg concluded from his study that the highest stage of moral development was marked by the ability to invoke abstract and universal principles of justice in solving moral dilemmas, Gilligan offered an alternative model of morality that was embedded in specific contexts and guided by a sense of interpersonal connectedness. While Kohlberg's male subjects developed toward an objective detachment from the situations that produced moral problems, Gilligan's female subjects preferred a subjective approach that resisted separating the moral problem from its social context.

Subsequent work by feminist philosophers has attempted to de-essentialize theory about an ethic of care, maintaining that women often endorse a care-based ethic not because they are women, but because they are culturally positioned as women and have thus grown to recognize and accept the types of moral responsibilities that have historically fallen within the feminine sphere, just as the men in Kohlberg's study were positioned to give the moral responses elicited from them. The ethic of care is a work ethic that grows out of the position women have long occupied, almost exclusively, as caregivers to infants and young children. Dramatically dominating the maternal workforce throughout a range of positions, from wetnurses to daycare workers to elementary teachers, women have acquired cultural authority as providers of care and nurturance, prompting some feminist philosophers to posit motherhood as a prototype of women's work in this culture. Accordingly, the activity of maternal nurture and the ethical construction of motherhood receive particular attention in the work of philosophers such as Nel Noddings (1984) and Sara Ruddick (1989).

Noddings's (1984) formulation of a care ethic assumes the *relational self* to be ontologically basic, an assumption that appears to distinguish her moral code from contractual ethics of justice or rights premised upon the autonomous self as the essential unit of moral thought and action. Offering the mother–child dyad as the prototype of relational subjectvity, she describes relational identity as a union of "the one caring" and "the one cared for." To indicate the broader applications of this maternal ethic, she describes how its tenets might govern situations involving such participants as doctor and patient and teacher and student. The ethical identity of the one-cared-for in such relationships, according to Noddings, is distinguished by a greater need and vulnerability, while the one-caring is invested with the authority to help.

Noddings's (1984) scheme clearly delineates the moral agency of the one-caring as a force that derives from concern for the welfare, protection, and enhancement of the one-cared-for, but the motive function of the one-cared-for is more sketchily described as an affirmative force of "recognition." In an effort to distinguish this seemingly unbalanced care ethic from the moral taint of paternalism, Noddings emphasizes the receptive rather than the attributional qualities of care, describing it as "receptive rationality." This form of rationality, rather than imposing a predetermined system of logic upon the interaction of self and other, attempts to receive into itself the Reason of the other.

Similarly focused on the mother–child relationship as the foundational model for an ethic of care, Sara Ruddick's *Maternal Thinking* (1989) also assumes relatedness to be ontologically basic. Ruddick describes this relatedness in terms of the responsibilities that connect the mother to her child—namely, the nurturant responsibilities of protecting and promoting the survival, growth, and socialization of the child. In examining the practices mothers may employ to meet these ends, the characteristic decisions they face, and the characteristic failures they are prey to, Ruddick represents maternal care as a "discipline" that involves both intellectual judgment and emotional investment. Finally, like Noddings (1984), who broadens the scope of the care ethic beyond motherhood to encompass moral education, Ruddick argues that although mothering has traditionally been classified as "women's work," the caring practices from which maternal thinking emerges are not biologically determined and therefore can and should be undertaken by men and women alike. Indeed, she maintains that the ethic of care models an ideal for human relationships and political conduct on the global stage. But like Noddings, Ruddick remains primarily interested in the moral actions and attributes of the giver of care whose moral stance she describes as "attentiveness," and whose principal moral gestures are those of reception and response.

Still focused on the mother–child relationship and its implications for the development of mature female identity, psychologist Jessica Benjamin (1988) attempts to theorize relational identity grounded in care as a state of "intersubjectivity" that describes an equal sharing of moral agency. Like the feminist philosophers who derive their theories of care from the work of Carol Gilligan, Benjamin seeks to construct an alternative to the Freudian developmental model, which she describes as a patriarchal repudiation of femininity through the equation of mother–child relatedness with submersion of self in other. If human relationships according to this model are assumed to function solely within a dynamic of dominance and submission, development of autonomous subject/agent status out of infantile dependence requires the objectification of the nurturant, feminine other. In cultural terms, this objectification of the maternal figure translates into a rejection of the "engulfing" feminine world in favor of the liberating sphere of masculine autonomy symbolized by the father. But such a scenario, Benjamin argues, is grounded in an impoverished understanding of relational subjectivity—a concept that she defines as an "intersubjective" alternative to hierarchical subject–object relatedness. Truly intersubjective relationships constitute "a state of balance in which neither pole dominates the other, in which paradox is sustained" (p. 82). The ideal of care that sustains such a balance connects the self and the other in the dual processes of recognition and response. Significantly for writing teachers, Benjamin's description of moral agency within intersubjective relationships employs the term of "authorship":

> A person comes to feel that "I am the doer who does. I am the author of my act," by being with another person who recognizes her acts, her feelings, her intentions, her existence, her independence. Recognition is the essential response, the constant companion of assertion. The subject declares, "I am, I do," and waits for the response, "You are, you have done." Recognition is, thus, reflexive; it includes not only the other's confirming response, but also how we find ourselves in that response. (1992, p. 170)

The resultant intersubjective unit consists not of a subject and an object, but of dual subjects, each of whom finds and responds to the self in the other with, in Benjamin's words, "the awareness that different minds can share the same perceptions, the experience of a transitional space that is not sharply defined as inside or outside" (p. 192).

Political philosopher Joan Tronto (1993) is similarly concerned with the cultural bias that interprets relational, caring ethics according to patriarchal standards of moral autonomy, and for this reason she argues that the ethic of care should be uncoupled from the model of maternal nurture. Carter's (1967) suggestion that the student's umbilical cord must be severed in order to insure intellectual maturation conforms to what Tronto describes as a culturally pervasive trivialization of care as a construct of purely maternal ethics. The moral values of mothers, she notes, are associated with intimacy and the private world of family and friends, and as such they seem irrelevant to the politics of public life. Safely contained within the boundaries of private life, care is easily dismissed as a narrow and parochial response to moral questions and thus "a secondary form of moral thinking" (p. 90) that is easily subsumed by a morality based on impersonal, "universal" principles of justice that seek to uphold individual rights.

Tronto's critique of the care-based moral theory advanced by Gilligan (1982), Noddings (1984), and Ruddick (1989) urges the dissociation of care from the romanticized model of maternal nurture because this association encourages us to isolate care as a purely emotional, even instinctive, response, thereby allowing us to overlook the political implications of the ways caring work is distributed in this culture. Furthermore, by associating caregivers with mothers, we construct a childlike identity for the recipients of care.

Tronto's (1993) project, then, is to propose a new theory of social and political life that, acknowledging the interdependence of all human beings, dismantles the cultural boundaries we have erected between private and public life. Such a theory relocates care from its privatized isolation on the margins of political life to a position of open centrality. Political reform, for Tronto, begins with an analysis of caregiving relationships in society. At present, she notes, caregiving labor is disproportionately assumed by those who are least well off and who have traditionally been excluded from political life: women, servants, and slaves. In present-day America, most caring work continues to be performed by men and women of color and by women of the working class. Those who are well off, meanwhile, tend to assume caring responsibilities from a considerable distance; they may "care about" others, or "take care of" others' needs by assuming financial, legal, or managerial responsibility, but rarely do they "give care to" others in the sense of tending directly to the bodily or emotional needs of another.

Tronto (1993) explains the lowly status of care and caregivers as a function of the contempt with which a society governed by an ethic of self-reliance regards neediness and interdependence. To preserve an image of self-reliance, she explains, we must distance ourselves from those who appear, in whatever way, pitiable in their neediness, thereby maintaining them in a category of identity separate from our own. Tronto identifies the psychological origin of this impulse in terms of object-relations theory as infantile rage at the realization that we are powerless to control those we depend upon to meet our needs. The defensive creation of an illusion of independence and autonomy veils a frustrated desire to control those we need to care for us and leads to the social devaluation of caregivers and the work they perform.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO ABOUT THE "WOMEN'S WORK" OF COMPOSITION? AN ETHICAL DILEMMA

In her much-cited essay, "Composing as a Woman," Elizabeth Flynn (1990) writes that "the emerging field of composition studies could be described as a feminization of our previous conceptions of how writers write and how writing should be taught" (p. 112). Flynn goes on to explain that the feminization process in composition involves a transformation of the subjectivity of the composition teacher. Current composition specialists, she notes, "replace the figure of the authoritative father with an image of the nurturing mother" (pp. 112–113), subscribing to a pedagogical ideal embodied by "a committed teacher concerned about the growth and maturity of her students who provides feedback on ungraded drafts, reads journals, and attempts to tease out meaning from the seeming incoherence of student language" (p. 113). In a similar vein, Donnalee Rubin (1993) advocates a "maternal paradigm" of composition pedagogy, a "conference/process-based" approach to teaching that assumes the nurturant responsibilities of the teacher who seeks to "foster growth in thinking, to nurture fragile, emerging voices; to encourage active participation in dialogue; and to help students become accepted members of their social and academic communities" (p. 62).

With its emphasis on receptivity and response and its attentiveness to the survival, development, and successful socialization of vulnerable others, the ethic of care offered by feminist thinkers surveyed in the previous section holds considerable appeal to a discipline like composition, which is charged with the socialization of the uninitiated to the discourse of the academic community. Not surprisingly, then, Patrocinio Schweikert (1990) applies the ethic of care described by Ruddick (1989) and Noddings (1984) directly to the composition classroom in her formulation of the teacher–student relationship that should govern the act of reading when the reader is the instructor and the text is a student-authored essay. "Both text and reader are social entities," she writes, "and...the encounter between them is always conditioned by the social context in which it occurs" (p. 79). The social context of classroom instruction, she explains, is one in which the instructor's role is "to foster the student's project" by encouraging "the development of the student's capacity to express herself" (p. 84). What is called for, she concludes, is "a model of intersubjectivity that incorporates the *ethic of care*" (p. 87). Reading that is ruled by this ethic is both attentive and receptive, resisting the impulses of self-interest and self-assertion that prompt the reader to project herself into the text. Instead, the reader seeks to "recognize and receive" the motives and intentions of the writer's subjectivity.

Schweikert is well aware of the polarization, which may result from the assertion of feminine, relational values in an institutional arena where an opposing ethic holds sway. In an attempt to defuse the unresolvable masculine/feminine conflict that appears inescapable in her vision of academic reform, she insists that the reigning academic ethic is not "masculine," but "hyper-masculine." Liberating academic discourse from its hyper-masculine traditions, she concludes, will allow us to understand meaning as an ethical site where "masculine" and "feminine" worldviews converge to include "the issue of care no less than the issues of truth and power" (p. 93). Within this convergence of the masculine and feminine is Schweikert's vision of the ethical unity of teacher and scholar, one who values the process of *learning* equally with its product, *knowledge.*

While Flynn, Rubin, and Schweikert all celebrate the transformed identity of the ideal composition teacher, and, in the case of Schweikert, of the academic subject more generally, other compositionists remain skeptical. Susan Miller's *Textual Carnivals* (1991) offers a compelling argument for dismissing the feminine label as pejorative and disempowering to compositionists, particularly as this feminine identity is further qualified as maternal. According to Miller, the academy's "female coding" for composition teachers' identity culminates in the "infantile" coding of composition student identities. This infantalization of students in composition classes, reflected to some extent in Rubin's description of students' "fragile, emerging voices," and in Flynn's reference to "the seeming incoherence of student language," results from the historical development of the composition course as "remedial" or "prerequisite"—courses that merely anticipate real academic life and are themselves only transitional to that life. Additionally, the presumed academic immaturity of composition students is reinforced by the compulsory nature of the course, which Miller discerns in "the persistent objectification/subjection of the student that follows from the requirements, from placement and 'diagnostic' exams, and from the absence of choice among the emphases or conduct of sections of one course taught by those described in the course schedules as anonymous 'staff'" (p. 102). The anonymity of these staff workers, whose numbers include a high percentage of "cheap" laborers in the form of graduate teaching assistants, adjuncts, and part-timers, accords with their institutional status as "domestic" servants to whom is consigned the academic analogue to childcare.

Like Miller, Cynthia Tuell (1993) has little faith that the "feminine" values of composition instruction can gain acceptance and genuine respect in an academy that holds "women's work" in contempt as menial and anti-intellectual, though she herself proclaims the values of this work. Tuell writes that she is exposing composition's exploitation of "women's work" in the name of "feminine principle," a term that she defines through an account of her own anxieties about the value of her work and her doubts about the academic maturity of the self who performs it:

> I'm forty years old. I have taught composition passionately and with commitment for almost twenty years, sometimes part-time, usually full-time. Every year, I do it better. And yet I, too, sometimes joke that I still don't know what I want to be when I grow up. Famous, influential, glorified—I protest these patriarchal pipedreams in myself. I protest my own deep-seated doubt about the importance of the work I do, helping a few handfuls of freshmen to write just a little bit better, while the big, muscular world, oblivious to us, goes on about its epoch-building business, its significant strife and harrowing achievements. I protest in the memory of our billion dispossessed and forgotten foremothers, to whom I commit myself on feminine principle. (p. 125)

Compared with Schweikert's conciliatory advancement of feminine principles, Tuell's (1993) essay is defiant in its tone as she describes those workers whose "passions" and "commitments" are the victims of nonfeminine (in)justice. Those who perform the services expected of women constitute a workforce of "daughters, handmaids, whores, and mothers" whose labors are viewed as "dirty, tedious, but not very difficult" (p. 126) or are idealized as nurturant and selfless (pp. 129–131). In either case, theirs is work undertaken to serve the interests of the "masters" in a patriarchal institution. As Tuell explains, "composition teaching, like mothering, disappears into the one who is taught" (p. 132), and she cites Sara Ruddick's caveat that the logic of mothering in a patriarchal culture involves an acceptance of "the uses to which others put one's children" and a willingness to "train our children to find their suitable places in a man's world" (p. 133). Ascending to power in this masculine world means acquiring among other privileges "the right to the services of many women" (p. 125).

Tuell's (1993) impassioned manifesto demonstrates the logical difficulty of conjoining two work ethics that express distinct, and mutually exclusive, value systems. The task is made even more difficult when the political context is controlled by one system in a relationship of dominance over the other. The political prototype of all such hierarchical relationships, according to gender critiques, is the political system of patriarchy, which normalizes the submission of women to men. A source of anger or despair for many feminist compositionists is the pervasive cultural context that simultaneously romanticizes and devalues forms of caring labor and infuses the academic institution with a value system that subordinates teaching to the more venerated form of labor we recognize as scholarship. The politics that justifies composition's lowly position in the academy, Miller and Tuell both maintain, merely manifests a cultural logic that is largely blind to the virtues of women's work. In protesting the injustice of patriarchal ethics, Tuell cites Elizabeth Daumer and Sandra Runzo, who maintain that composition teaching participates in the ideology of women's work, which "hardly ever escapes, even when idealized, the connotations of 'preparation' or 'service' for a higher, presumably worthier entity or cause" (p. 45).

In the academy, as in the world at large, labor that is devalued is most readily "hired out." And while composition instruction is by no means the only form of academic labor to be assigned to those who are only partially or marginally members of the academic labor force, the present reality that many composition instructors are not considered full-fledged academic citizens offers material evidence that teaching work in composition is not highly valued. Miller (1992) has pointed out that from early in its history the "mundane" (p. 127) and "subordinate" (p. 128) faculty have regarded composition instruction as competing with other, worthier forms of academic labor and as work that is "actually threatening to the time necessary to compete for academic rewards" (p. 127). Robert Connors (1990) gives a similar account of the historical development of composition instruction as academic work that was regarded not only as dull and menial, but as poorly compensated and backbreaking in its demands on a teacher's time, such that career advancement was seriously jeopardized. The historical establishment of such work conditions, according to Connors, accounted for the early feminization of the composition teaching profession. He cites the words of Stith Thompson in his response to a 1929 study of the composition workforce: "The pertinent question is raised as to whether a certain nucleus of rather permanent freshman composition teachers may be valuable, and this brings up the subject of women instructors—who do often seem to be willing to settle down to a life of efficient freshman teaching without any idea of going further in their academic career" (p. 121). Speculating on the reasons women were apparently willing to tolerate the work conditions of college composition more readily than men, Connors suggests that the reasons might be found in the limited professional choices open to women at the time, or in the desirability of part-time work for women who had children to care for. He also acknowledges the cultural logic of separate masculine and feminine spheres of action, which reasons that the work of "nurturing...younger college students through their required composition courses" might be more in line with the ethical inclinations of women than of men, describing the work as "appealing to women in a way it was not to male Ph.D.s" (p. 121).

The appeal of women's work, as explained by an ethic of care, is encapsulated in the ideal of coequal intersubjectivity. According to this ideal, the personhood of each is supported by recognition from the other, so that the virtue of care does indeed become its own reward. Tuell (1993) formulates the rewards of caring as the relational virtues of "passion" and "commitment" found in the work of "helping a few handfuls of freshmen write just a little bit better." Yet the problem, as many feminist critics of composition see it, is the political and economic containment of these teaching values by institutional structures designed to promote an ideal of scholarship by which a commitment to impartial truth transcends interpersonal concerns that may characterize the composition classroom. The logic behind such containment derives from the premise that an abstraction—textually encoded knowledge—is the ultimate product of academic labor. Within the academy, the work of teaching strives to produce scholars, who in turn produce knowledge. Composition teaching, however, is even further distanced than other forms of teaching from this academic end product, having been conceived since its first appearance in the late 19th century as an *anticipatory* form of instruction, intended not to produce scholars, but to produce *potential* scholars—academically literate citizens who might eventually and with more advanced instruction develop into scholars. Because composition was from the beginning instituted as a teaching field in service to more elevated academic values, and remains firmly anchored in the work of undergraduate teaching, it occupies today an institutional site where the conflicts and incompatibilities between identities constructed as "scholarly" and "teacherly" are especially concentrated.

Because the field of composition has developed out of an entry-level composition course originally instituted for the purpose of preparing students to survive and prosper in academe, no ethical consideration of the work of composition should overlook the consequences the discipline may have for students. Much of the discomfort in compositionists' response to the "feminized" label comes from a sense that if we accept the practical reality of an impersonal and competitive political economy that empowers some at the expense of others, we need to question the validity of a teaching ethic that conceptualizes the initial contact between students and the academic institution in terms of caring, interpersonal relatedness. If we represent to our students an institution that embodies the cultural values of individual autonomy, critical distance, and objective detachment, is it not misleading to constitute the composition classroom as a safe and nurturant place governed by an ethic of care?

To be sure, the designation of the classroom as a nurturant "safe area" implies the presence of danger in the world outside the classroom walls, and some compositionists have argued that because composition classrooms are contained within a rhetorically confrontational environment, the safety they may seek to provide is illusory if not actually deceptive. "Toward an Ethics of Teaching Writing in a Hazardous Context—the University," an article co-written by composition student Sandy Moore and her teacher, Michael Kleine (1992), probes the validity of the academic "safety zone," which some composition courses (and most writing centers) are designed to represent, and concludes that in reality, "there is no sanctuary, no protected context" (p. 398). The article narrates the story of Kleine's efforts, in accordance with a pedagogy advocated by James Britton and Peter Elbow, to construct his classroom as a site where students could "write without fear" (p. 387), where they could "play the believing game" (p. 387) and be "empowered to participate in the construction of knowledge and the shaping of the world" (p. 388). In accordance with these guidelines, Moore, the student writer, viewed the classroom not as a public space, but as a private or "home" space, a "safe" harbor in which to practice rhetorical maneuvers that might later prove useful on the open seas of public life. When Moore responded to an epideictic essay assignment by writing about the sexual harrassment that was allowed to continue at her workplace, however, she and her instructor discovered the presumed privacy of the classroom to be a naive illusion. As a result of stories that circulated about the essay among her co-workers and boss, Moore was fired from her job. Reflecting on the incident, Kleine is led to redefine the classroom as a site within a public and therefore "hazardous" institutional context.

Criticism of the "expressivist" brand of composition pedagogy that issues from an ethic of care has largely centered on the disjuncture that Kleine and Moore discovered in their attempts to construct the classroom as a safe place. Some, like James Berlin (1988), Patricia Bizzell (1982), and Lester Faigley (1989), have charged that expressivism, with its concentration on the "personal" or "authentic" voices of individuals, ignores the social and political dimensions of composition instruction and therefore does little to equip students to function as politically conscious citizens of the world beyond the classroom. Bizzell (1982), for instance, criticizes the early work of expressivists such as Ken Macrorie and Peter Elbow because it sets composition in opposition to the discourse values of the academic community, seeking to "liberate" students from the "trammels" of the institution to which they seek admission (p. 193). Having taught basic writing students in an authentic voice writing class, Bizzell reflects that although she was pleased with some of her students' writing, ultimately the class was ineffective because "it postponed their confrontation, and mine, with the great inequalities in their preparation for the world of college" (p. 194). By encouraging students to articulate their "authentic"—that is, nonacademic—selves in a classroom designed to be an anomolous, safe place within the academy, composition teachers engage in a practice that "covertly reintroduces discriminatory practices while cloaking the force of convention in concessions to the 'personal'" (p. 196). What students need instead, Bizzell concludes, is a depersonalized understanding of language and knowledge—"composition instruction that exposes and demystifies the institutional structure of knowledge" (p. 196).

It is reasonable to say that the care ethic is one that promotes "personal" rather than solely "feminine" virtues. In conventional usage, the two terms are often interchanged, a practice that appears to be bolstered by the aphoristic force of the feminist motto "the personal is political." Yet it is possible—and as Card (1995) and Tronto (1993) suggest, necessary—to uncouple the concept of the personal from that of the feminine. As Card argues, "informal" or "personal" human relationships are as basic as the "formal," "impersonal," or "institutional" relationships we enter into as professionals. The cultural tendency to ascribe to women authority in the realm of personal relatedness comes not from women's superior abilities or innate understanding of such relationships; rather, as Card explains it, "What women more clearly have had is more than our share of the responsibility for maintaining these kinds of relationships and less than our share of the responsibilities of participating and defining formal institutions" (p. 92). When we perform the conceptual separation of the feminine and the personal, we can see that what is often described as the "feminization" of composition instruction may alternately be viewed as the "personalization" of the discipline's teaching. Evidence of the value composition ascribes to the personal can be found in the current interest in the power of the personal essay, the voice of the writer, and the interpersonal, multivocal environments in which writers produce texts. The alleged "feminization" of composition, encoded in "expressivist" pedagogical values that are "student-centered," "developmental," "response-based," "collaborative," and "process-oriented," implies the construction of the classroom not as a feminine realm, but as a personal and therefore intimate or *private* realm where personal histories and interpersonal relationships hold primary sway.

Analyses of the public discourse of academe often point out its strategies for erasing traces of the personal identities of reader and writer, creating a textual ideal in which meaning is the unambiguous product of a universal rationality rather than the uncertain result of human communication. John Trimbur (1990) has shown how the discourse conventions of this community conform to the paradigm of the autonomous text, described by David Olson (1977) as "essayist literacy." According to Trimbur, the rhetoric of this community is a rhetoric of "deproduction," which presumes to erase the individual, personal identities of its members in a quest for a knowledge that is rational, objective, and disinterested. Disconnected from its author and the social circumstances of its composition, the text of essayist literacy is a self-referential construct that embodies the detached, objective gaze of Blind Justice or of the principled "Man of Reason," a figure not unlike the respondents in Kohlberg's study who exemplified the most advanced stage of moral development. While Trimbur is primarily focused on how the ideology of essayist literacy positions students as readers, Peter Elbow (1991), in his "Reflections on Academic Discourse: How it Relates to Freshmen and Colleagues," considers how the phenomenon of academic rhetoric positions student writers. If the academic ideal is "author-evacuated prose," Elbow wonders, how are composition teachers supposed to conceive of the work of producing authors?

COMPOSITION AND THE ETHICS OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY: ASSERTING THE RIGHT TO CARE

The dilemma Elbow (1991) addresses in his essay describes not only the rhetorical but also the ethical position of those whose professional identity demands that they address their attention simultaneously to their entry-level students and to their colleagues. As workers in a field that is currently emerging from strictly pedagogical origins into full academic disciplinary status, compositionists must, in a sense, carry on a dual life, like the proverbial "Supermom," who somehow manages to have it all—home, family, and a flourishing professional career. What makes this juggling feat especially tricky is that the two spheres of operation, representations that resemble what we know as private and public, or as teaching and scholarship, require the worker to function under two seemingly opposing ethics.

Compositionists who assert the interpersonal care ethic as a guide in their labor as teachers empowered to promote the academic survival, growth, and socialization of entry-level students assume academic responsibilities that in many ways resemble the domestic labor of women, historically carried out in the private sphere of home and family—a sphere defined largely by the way it is partitioned off and contained within a broader "public" sphere. As Alistair White (1989) has pointed out in his work on the gendered nature of the separate spheres, the private world conventionally governed by the feminine agency of mothers and wives is at once apart from and a part of the public sphere. Citing psychologist Richard Sennet's claim that families with "good" parents seek to establish *close, personal* relationships among individual family members, White points out that the family is paradoxically situated in opposition to and in the service of the largely impersonal values of the surrounding political economy. The dual functions of the family—providing a safe and nurturant place for the personal growth of its members and preparing these same members to fit into an impersonal world—are inevitably contradictory.

According to White (1989), three questionable premises underlie the separation of public and private life. First, there is the assumption that the private, domestic realm of home and family is the proper sphere of feminine authority; second, there is the assumption that the two realms are in fact separate and must be kept that way; and finally, there is the assumption that the private realm lies outside the public concerns of society. White goes on to acknowledge that the separation of the two spheres along gender lines is less obvious now than in Victorian times, but he maintains that the entry of women into public life over the course of the past century has done little to change the separate, incompatible ethics that govern public and private life. Changing the sex of the players is merely a superficial revision, so long as the rules of the game remain the same. While individual men and women are freer now to move between the separate spheres, the dichotomous notions of feminine and masculine right behavior in which the separation is grounded are still firmly in place.

So may we view the conflict between the separate sides of composition's divided identity, now split between the field's pedagogical origins and its scholarly aspirations. To the extent that the composition classroom may be ethically conceptualized as a caregiving work site, it finds itself both at odds with and in the service of the ethical structures of the academy, where the ideal of the autonomous individual promotes the presumably manly functions of independent intellectual exploration and argumentative combat and conquest. As composition pulls away from its pedagogical origins in an effort to bring its disciplinary identity in line with established academic values, it replicates in its own development the ideological construction of the human maturational process that Jessica Benjamin (1988) described as patriarchy's repudiation of femininity.

Benjamin's (1988) desire to "feminize" this developmental narrative leads her to theorize "intersubjectivity" as an ethics of nonoppressive relatedness, a relatedness in which self and other are paradoxically distinct and identical, separate and connected, autonomous and dependent. Her revised version of human development is a radical one, for it implies dismantling currently functioning systems that assume the validity, and indeed the inevitability, of hierachical social structures composed of forms of interpersonal relatedness that are always reducible to the terms of dominance and submission. The ultimate purpose of Benjamin's revisionism is not merely to level patriarchy, but to create a social system where all persons share free and equal opportunities for healthy pursuit of physical, emotional, and intellectual growth. While those who celebrate the feminization of composition instruction may applaud the ethical model Benjamin envisions and attempt to implement something like her ideal of intersubjectivity in their interactions with students and student texts, this ethical reform, if limited to the composition classroom or writing center, must itself eventually submit to the greater power of a "different" encompassing academic ethic.

While Benjamin's primary concern is to extend Gilligan's investigations into the construction of human relationships at the level of personal psychology, Joan Tronto (1993) insists that any gains that come from this line of study must be accompanied by a convincing articulation of how the personal is political, and it is to her work that we may turn for guidance in the task of asserting the rights and responsibilities of care beyond the walls of the writing classroom or writing center. As Tronto has suggested, care can be seen as a site where personal and private identities converge with political and public identities. Viewed in this light, care becomes central not only to moral thinking and conduct, but also to sociopolitical concerns—such as the establishment of systems for distributing work responsibilities and rewards. In the case of composition, the intersection of politics and the ethics of care is best clarified by analyzing where and how care is positioned in academic life. Doing so enables us to see how structures of power and privilege operate in the service of a competetive institutional work ethic that prizes textual production as a symbolic expression of liberation from the interpersonal bondage of human neediness and dependence. Within this scheme, the heroic figure of the scholar is measured by standards of textual productivity, and in the humanities at least, in terms of independent inquiry (consider the importance of "single-authored" articles and books). Teachers and students, meanwhile, though they may conduct inquiry and make discoveries in the classroom, are apt to be diminished by established standards of scholarship. The textual production of students remains, for the most part, privatized, confined to the classroom, where it merely anticipates the status of true scholarship. Textual production in which teaching identity is functionally inscribed—for instance, syllabi, assignment sheets, written responses to student writing, textbooks, and study guides—is likewise discounted in the reigning political economy of academic textual production, perhaps because these texts are directed *down* toward students instead of *up* toward some ideal reader or some vision of transcendental truth and goodness.

CONCLUSION

The task facing composition as it now struggles to integrate the two faces of its professional identity is to affirm its caring/teaching identity while simultaneously casting its critical gaze upon the institutional structures in which academic values are inscribed. As a discipline that cannot afford to be split from its roots, it must embrace the logic of paradox, which entails, as Benjamin (1988) has observed, "a state of balance" between its so-called masculine and feminine identities "in which neither pole dominates the other" (p. 82). In struggling toward this ideal, compositionists must learn to promote an ethics of care in the language of scholarship, acknowledging the reality of the currently unequal balance of academic power between teaching and scholarship and the relative disregard for caring work that characterizes this imbalance. In part, the discipline's success in translating the ethics of care into scholarly terms necessitates a degendered conceptualization of the work of teaching and scholarship. Tronto's (1993) claim that when exclusively associated with mothers and other nurturant women, care is too easily parochialized, privatized, devalued, and disregarded, reminds us that however much we may wish to celebrate and promote virtues conventionally understood as "feminine," we do so in a rhetorical context where "women's work" still inspires contempt and avoidance. While we ourselves may not wish to hold or concede to this view, we must make every effort to recognize and connect with those who do, to receive and consider their different truths, and to respond in ways that both acknowledge the other and remain focused on our own understandings of goodness, truth, and right relationships. In short, as members of the academic community, we compositionists must attempt to model an ethic of care not only for our students, but also for one another, for our colleagues across disciplinary boundaries and for academic administrators who are more immediately empowered to reify institutional values. We must see ourselves as teachers even when we are ostensibly performing as scholars, working to enact in our scholarly research a rhetoric of receptivity, recognition and responsiveness. As we work to extend the safety zone of the writing lab or the composition class into the academic community at large, we must refuse to abandon the interpersonal ethic of care as a critical part of our discipline's academic identity, but we must also be as firm in our resolve to *share* the rights and responsibilities of personhood contained in this ethic. Above all, we must resist the temptation to conform to the standards of an academic system that has long devalued the work out of which the identity of composition has developed. Like the subjects of Gilligan's (1982) study, we must insist on speaking in a different voice as we recognize the task of professionalization to be not merely the transformation of our own personal identities, or the discipline's identity, but the transformation of academic identity as a whole.

NOTE

[1] The following examples are drawn from a number of academic press catalogues distributed by the University of Chicago Press, University of Toronto Press, Syracuse University Press, Cornell University Press, Indiana University Press, and Yale University Press between January 1992 and April 1993. Some of the language quoted here

originates in book reviews published in academic journals, which are in turn quoted in the catalogues for purposes of advertisement. To avoid an unwieldly and ultimately unhelpful plethora of citations, I have not provided individual bibliographic notes for each phrase I have quoted from these sources.

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chapter 10

Literacy, Equality, and Competence: Ethics in Writing Assessment

Michael M. Williamson
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Brian Huot
University of Louisville

While it is hard to argue that ethics should not occupy an important position in the development and use of the testing of writing, discussions of ethics, per se, have been all but nonexistent in the literature about the assessment of writing. It is important to note that when we talk about writing assessment we are referring to the kinds of assessment that take place outside of a classroom context for purposes of placement, exit, or programmatic review. This is not to say that these outside assessments are unrelated to classroom practice, since it is a truism that assessment can and does drive curriculum. It is also evident in writing assessment (Elbow, 1991; White, 1994) and educational assessment more broadly defined that much outside evaluation is in response to a distrust of teachers' assessment within pedagogical contexts:

> A major reason for the advent of externally controlled highly standardized testing systems has been the belief that teachers could not be trusted to make sound decisions about what students know and are able to do. (Darling-Hammond, 1994, p. 17)

Ethics has not been one of the foci of interest for those who write about and study writing assessment because "for the most part writing assessment has been developed, constructed and privatized by the measurement community as a technological apparatus whose inner workings require specialized knowledge" (Huot, 1996, p. 549). This does not mean that ethical considerations have been absent or neglected. Instead, ethics has been assumed within arguments about theoretical soundness and statistical rigor. Recently, the literature on assessment has been greatly concerned about issues of equity in testing, but this has yet to become an important part of the literature on writing assessment.

In writing assessment, the key dispute has been the consistent scoring of essays by independent raters (interrater reliability). Traditionally, in order for a measurement to be valid it also had to be reliable. The development of writing assessment procedures was for the most part the search for methods that could produce consistency in scoring (see Godshalk, Swineford, & Coffman, 1966, pp. 1–5, for a good review). At one point, testing theory could not support the direct scoring of student writing because it was so unreliable. In response to this unreliability, indirect measures (tests of grammar, mechanics, usage, and other language conventions) were developed and implemented. Members of the composition teaching community opposed these indirect measures, and conventional methods like holistic scoring were developed by testing professionals partly in response to the pressure brought by the English teaching community.

This chapter uses this dispute between two professional communities of scholars to explore the unarticulated but clearly conflicting code of ethics behind the stances taken by teachers and testers about the appropriate ways to assess writing. Even though the indirect testing of writing is no longer the focus of difference between the two communities, the difference in epistemology still holds in separating the two groups and in creating new debates about equity in measurement and newer forms of writing assessment. Although some assessment scholars, like Pamela Moss (1996), see the way both epistemologies can be used in assessment, behind these conflicts are basic differences in ethical stances and purposes for evaluating students. Our look at the ethics behind these two positions is a way to explore difference and to unearth assumptions to create a long overdue conversation about ethics and the assessment of writing.

EQUALITY, ETHICS, AND WRITING ASSESSMENT

Literacy has rarely, if ever, been equally or even equitably distributed among all the participants in a culture. Thus, equality continues to be one of the most important moral and ethical issues dominating discussions about the teaching and testing of literacy. In particular, writing teachers have demonstrated considerable concern for access of all their students to the cultural power and personal empowerment of literacy in societies where a specific form of the written word is an integral part of political and economic life. Literacy has evolved into more than the just the ability to read and write. Notions, like E.D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy* (1988), and popular phrases, like functional literacy, frame literacy in a larger context as the key to success in American society. Shirley Brice Heath (1983) makes a similar argument for certain *Ways With Words*, providing entry to the mainstream of American life. However it might be framed, literacy has traditionally been associated with political and economic privilege. For instance, learning to read and write was considered to be a very serious crime by owners of enslaved African Americans. Evidence of such learning was routinely punished by death. This extreme case demonstrates clearly the power that literacy has traditionally held in American society.

Equality has been interpreted in many ways and, consequently, these differing interpretations have contributed to the conflict over approaches among teachers and researchers interested in writing assessment. These conflicts have been at the heart of the debate over the assessment of writing in schooling, in which one side has looked for contextual, pedagogical approaches and the other has developed measures capable of assessing student writing ability in the most efficient manner beyond individual context for large populations of students.

This debate we refer to goes back to at least 1912, when Starch and Eliott first questioned the consistency of scores given by independent raters to the same papers (interrater reliability). Without a certain statistical level of interrater reliability, the direct measurement of writing ability was psychometrically invalid. Consequently, testers developed *indirect* measures that consisted of multiple choice tests of grammar, usage, and mechanics. Thus, the debate between the different technological approaches to the assessment of writing (see Huot, 1996, for a discussion of writing assessment as technology) involves differences about both the distribution of the technologies of literacy themselves and about the different technological approaches to writing assessment. And, the disagreement over writing assessment reflects a disagreement over the purposes for assessment, reflecting and masking a fundamental disagreement over the appropriate functions of literacy in American culture and the best way to foster literacy acquisition in American education. In other words, constructing writing ability as something that has to be measured through the reading and scoring of student writing versus a test on the conventions of writing juxtaposes different beliefs and assumptions about what constitutes literacy, its teaching, and ethical behavior about its measurement. This debate, while largely over (although the indirect assessment of writing is a continuing reality), looms large in the current backlash against whole language and other functional approaches to language instruction that are presently the cornerstone of informed practice in the teaching of writing.

In writing assessment, the debate has been primarily over the importance of reliability as a central characteristic of assessment procedures. For a long time, the meaning of this debate was purely a theoretical and technological one. Indirect measures of writing ability, multiple choice tests primarily, had been demonstrated to be highly reliable, meeting an important standard for the psychometric adequacy of an assessment procedure: "From a psychometric point of view, it does appear that indirect assessment [tests of grammar and mechanics] alone can afford a satisfactory measure of writing skills" (Cooper, 1984, p. 27). However, Karen L. Greenberg, Harvey S. Wiener, and Richard A. Donovan (1986), in the Preface to their collection of essays on writing assessment, as well as Ed White (1993), in his "Holistic Scoring: Past Triumphs, Future Challenges," have recorded the extent of the challenge by writing teachers to indirect writing assessment because these procedures do not involve the use of writing. Direct assessment procedures have been considered by writing teachers to have greater theoretical validity, when compared to indirect procedures, because they involved the production of writing. However, as Williamson (1993) has also noted, psychometric researchers, specialists in psychological approaches to educational assessment, challenged the relatively poor reliability of direct approaches and questioned their relatively higher administration costs.

Ed White's claim that a test *must* be reliable to be fair—"Reliability is a simple way of talking about fairness to test takers, and if we are not interested in fairness, we have no business giving tests or using test results" (1993, p. 93)—frames a technical issue in ethical terms. White's ethical warrant is part of his larger claims for consistency in measurement and the wide use of holistic and other psychometrically supported procedures for the evaluation of student writing. Equality is a more precise term in this context because it is a more accurate label for the phenomenon that White is referencing.

Clearly, consistency is important to any notion of equality, but it is inaccurate to equate equality with consistency in measurement. As well, equality in measurement is tied directly to the deeper issues, involving the choice of which Americans will be given the opportunity to continue to develop their abilities with literacy; this is in keeping with developing notions of validity, which we discuss later in the chapter, in which the validity or suitability of a measurement is based upon the adequacy of decisions made based upon a measurement, rather than the internal properties of the test itself. White (1993) suggests that interrater reliability is a crucial component of direct writing assessment because it insures that every examinee is treated equally by the rating process. However, fairness involves reasonableness, not equality. One might argue that interrater reliability may result in a strict equality among texts at a rating session, but does not provide any guarantees against unfair treatment of persons taking the test, if the test is not a valid approach to writing assessment. For example, George Englehard, Jr., Belita Gordon, and Stephen Gabrielson (1992) report on having assessed the writing of over 125,000 students. Although the rate of agreement between raters was quite high, satisfying technical considerations for assessment and White's ethical claims, these rater judgments were largely based on language conventions. Such assessment practices furnish the illusion of having fairly and accurately evaluated student writing. In reality, such an assessment is based upon criteria similar to that used in multiple choice testing—student proficiency with a certain, privileged form of the language. While this evaluation might satisfy those in the measurement community, it can hardly be satisfactory to White and the legion of English teachers who share his concern about fairness in assessing student writing.

Furthermore, charging that the only fair test is one that has interrater reliability overlooks the complexity of the issues involved with the fairness of the entire test itself. For instance, as Murphy and Ruth (1993) have noted, the topics used in writing assessments are potential sources of inequality if examinees' cultures do not foreground the issues in the topic. Reliability is only a single criterion for the psychometric adequacy of an assessment procedure. The central issue for psychometric adequacy, according to Samuel Messick (1989), a proponent of newer versions of validity in measurement, is that the validity of the judgment is made on the basis of the assessment procedure. Thus, educational tests, in and of themselves, do not have validity (Cronbach, 1988; Messick, 1989). Because of the value given to consistency in measurement, it is worth repeating that we should not base the equity of a test upon a single feature like reliability. And, as the code of ethics for those using educational tests directly states, no decision about an individual should be based upon a single item of data, such as a test score.

It should be clear from our brief outline of the conflict of the two camps with interest in writing assessment that their different views are based upon differing values that underlie the foundation of the individual professions. To illustrate the application of these differing values, we examine basic documents produced by each side, which take responsibility for directing its members toward ethical behavior in measuring student writing ability. The first documents are a general set of standards developed by a joint committee from the American Psychological Association (APA), the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME), and the American Educational Research Association (AERA) (1985) to codify expectations by those professional associations for educational and psychological researchers, as well as teachers and psychologists, in the use and development of educational and psychological assessment. The other set of standards was developed and published by the International Reading Association (IRA), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and the Conference on College

Composition and Communication (CCCC) (1994) to guide members of those associations, who are both researchers and teachers of literacy, in the development and use of specific assessments of literacy.

COMPETENCE, ETHICS, AND PROFESSIONALISM

Any discussion of ethics within a professional setting necessarily requires a consideration of competence. A clear instance of an ethical standard for most professions is the prohibition against personal relationships, sexual ones in particular, between professional and client. On the other hand, a clear instance of the competence of a professional is involved when questions about his or her skill are involved. However, even in the case of the prohibition on personal involvement with clients, the matter seems to be predicated, in part, upon a concern for the competence of the professional to represent the best interests of the client. A potential conflict of interest for the professional might emerge as a result of the relationship itself if the professional's needs interfere with his or her ability to act in the best interest of the client. For instance, surgeons are often enjoined from operating on members of their own families. The issue seems to rest on an assumption that a disinterested professional is better able to make competent professional judgments. Prosecuting attorneys are automatically excluded from cases involving family or friends. Thus, ethical matters can become matters of competency. Conversely, there are ethical roots in cases where professionals choose to work with clients on problems outside of their expertise. Without appropriate knowledge to properly assist clients, professionals have the ethical responsibility to help those clients in finding another professional with the appropriate expertise. For instance, a criminal lawyer does not usually give advice on tax matters. However, the relationship and boundaries of testing to education are never quite as clear as our example of different kinds of legal activity, and often testers and/or teachers are drawn into making claims or giving advice about matters they might not be entirely expert about. We suggest that there is a strong relationship between standards that define competency for the two groups of professionals and standards that define ethical behavior. Given this basic assumption, we assert that any standards for professional conduct have, at their foundation, ethical concerns. For writing assessment, this means that competently assessing a student's ability to write in a specific, rhetorical situation has clear ethical ramifications, as it can affect that student's ability to receive appropriate instruction, entry, or exit from specific programs or institutions.[1]

THE *CODE OF FAIR TESTING PRACTICES IN EDUCATION* AND THE *STANDARDS FOR EDUCATIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING*

There are two primary documents that codify the ethical standards for those researchers and administrators trained in psychometric approaches to assessment, the *Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education* (n.d.) and the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (1985). Prepared by a joint committee of APA, AERA, and NCME, the *Standards* text is a lengthy document intended for use by professionals who develop and use assessment procedures in education and psychology. It has been revised about every 10 years since 1966, and a new revision is due out in about two years, according to a spokesperson at APA. Similarly developed by a joint committee of APA, AERA, and NCME, the *Code* is a four-page summary of the issues presented in the longer *Standards* document. The *Code* is intended for wide distribution among the clients for psychological services and participants in education who use or are subjected to educational assessment. Single copies can be obtained for free from APA.

One of the most important aspects of these two documents is that they provide an explicit statement of the responsibilities of both test developers and test users. Therefore, they provide a codification of the qualifications for working both with assessment procedures and in assessment development, as well as the ethical framework for conduct in both aspects of the field. Membership in the APA, in particular, requires scrutiny of credentials, and members are expelled for violations of the code of professional conduct. Thus, professionals in assessment inhabit an ecology that promotes professionalism in the sense that their competence in the field is explicitly linked to the ethics of their behavior, as well as the fact that the professional association can apply sanctions for failure to live up to the standards. One of the conditions that Shedd and Bacharach (1991) suggest is necessary for a field of employment to consider itself a profession is self-regulation. In this sense, psychometricians regularly engage in self-regulation, though their codification and enforcement of standards for professional conduct.

The *Code* has four basic parts relating to developing and selecting appropriate tests, interpretation of test scores, striving for fairness, and informing test takers. Since the limits of this chapter will not permit indepth examination of the entire document or the lengthier *Standards* document, we want to focus upon the juxtaposition of equality and fairness in the shorter *Code*. Section C, Striving for Fairness:

> Test developers should strive to make tests that are as fair as possible for test takers of different races, genders, ethnic backgrounds, or handicapping conditions.... (p. 3)

Section C suggests that equality in testing is one of the primary considerations of a test developer. Assessment development professionals are responsible for investigating the potential for a test to discriminate against groups of people for reasons unrelated to the purposes of the procedure. Should a test discriminate against a particular group, this inequality must be addressed by striving to remove it. However, if, for instance, a test is valid or accurately measures what it is designed to measure, and particular groups of people do not perform as well as others, then the test is considered to be fair assessment.

For example, several years ago, one large city sanitation department used a pre-employment screening test that involved lifting a garbage can with a 50 pound weight inside off the ground, moving it a short distance without dragging it on the ground, and upending it into a hopper at about waist level. The internal validity study suggested that, on average, men tend to perform the task more easily than women, because men typically have greater upper body strength than women. However, the test was considered fair because it is a direct demonstration of the ability of a person to perform as a sanitation truck attendant. Therefore, it was considered a "fair" test in terms of the standards promulgated by the *Code.* However, it is very plausible that upper body strength is not entirely biologically fixed in the human species and may be partly a result of sex role socialization from very early in life. Boys are encouraged to participate in activities that tend to develop upper body strength more readily than those activities in which girls are typically encouraged to participate. On the other hand, if lack of upper body strength was considered a handicapping condition, an employer might be responsible for altering the task to allow handicapped persons to have an equal chance at getting the job, or to provide remediation for the handicapping condition, such as weight-lifting exercises for a period of time. However, insufficient upper body strength to lift 50 pounds off the ground is not considered a physical handicap. Furthermore, a handicapping condition that would prevent someone from doing this kind of work is not the same as a handicapping condition in other kinds of work, where access to the job site is more at issue than actual performance.

An important ethical issue here is that assessment procedures are often used for gatekeeping. In our example, the assessment is used to exclude those individuals from employment who would be unable to perform the tasks involved with the work setting. To be fair, such tests must provide individual examinees with conditions that are strictly equal, both in terms of the task posed and the method of judging their performance on the task. Another use of assessment is identification of problems in individuals or groups that should be addressed to create true equality. This use of assessment procedures as diagnostic trials allows for people who wish to enter a field represented by the task to engage in a period of remedial action or to have the field modified to meet their limitations. The task provides an opportunity for individuals to have equity in the outcomes of an assessment process by focusing upon the decision to be made and providing opportunities for individuals to work within their apparent limitations and to overcome them.

We focus here on the notion that fairness is not directly connected to a strict standard of social equity when tests are used as gatekeeping tools. If the decisions based upon a test are valid, and genders or ethnic groups do not perform well enough to be selected on the basis of the assessment process, as long as the performances of people in those groups reflect their ability to do the task that is being assessed, then the process is considered fair. Thus, a test is considered fair if it reflects inequalities in the culture to the extent that the properties of the test do not make use of irrelevant factors, related but not limited to gender or ethnicity, in the assessment process. While the issues seem clear for simple gate keeping assessment like the one described above, more complex abilities are considerably more difficult to evaluate. Furthermore, the essential nature of gatekeeping assessments, a technology for social engineering, is not evident unless we discuss a more complex kind of assessment, which is embedded in a more complex set of cultural issues.

For example, intelligence tests (IQ) have repeatedly demonstrated that the average score for African Americans is 15 points below the average performances of European Americans. Asian Americans similarly have a slightly higher average score than Americans of European ancestry. The authors of the *Bell Curve*, Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray (1995), suggest that the difference in scores between African Americans and European Americans reflects important, inherent differences between these ethnic groups in American society. According to Herrnstein and Murray, the differences in scores implicitly assert a standard of individual, personal, and group merit, value, and contribution to American society. Mirroring the goal of creating a meritocracy in American culture was the basis for the introduction of large-scale assessment into American education in the first place (Williamson, 1994), Herrnstein and Murray suggest that American society is ill-advised to ignore those differences in IQ scores, which have traditionally been an important variable in the selection process for decisions about mental ability and educational opportunity. They also suggest that modifications of work and school environments to allow members of minority groups to perform up to recognizable standards are ill-advised social policy because these changes create a long-term problem for American society. Under such circumstances, the truly gifted and meritorious individuals whose leadership roles are needed in the culture will be unprepared because the changes instigated to allow marginalized groups to succeed will water down school curriculum and ultimately lead to the dilution of available leadership for the society. In essence, they argue that the tests identify the intellectual elite, the potential members of the meritocracy. From this perspective, if the tests prove to be biased against some ethnic or socioeconomic groups, they are "fair" in the larger picture because they reflect the needs of American culture to be led by the "best and the brightest." For Herrnstein and Murray, the long term consequences of equalizing racial differences in IQ testing is the degeneration of American culture and the disintegration of American society.

To understand the foundation of this position, it is important to note, however, that the criterion in validation studies of most intelligence tests is another intelligence test or a measure of success in schooling. In other words, IQ test results are validated by other test results. Clearly, when Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon originally developed measures of school ability in France before the beginning of this century, they did not intend them to become gatekeeping measures. Instead, their purpose was to identify students in the school who required additional assistance to become successful. Indeed, the origin of intelligence testing has to do with a concern for selecting out for special help those students who require assistance to be successful in schools. Thus, intelligence tests are primarily predictive measures of a child's relative success or failure in school.

Ultimately, the logic of intelligence tests as gatekeeping tools can be explained as follows. If schools are biased in favor of white, middle-class culture, then it is permissible for the tests to be biased in favor of that same cultural group.[2] Thus, the richness of American culture, built on a strong and diverse mixture of many cultural groups, is ignored by the developers of the tests. While a majority of the population may be privileged by the tests, they ignore the basic contribution of various minorities and have the effect of colonizing them as inferiors. Advanced levels of educational achievement are clearly one of the chief determinants of membership in higher socioeconomic levels in American culture. If IQ determines who has access to continuing education and is biased against ethnic minorities, then IQ testing helps replicate existing social structures and continues to disadvantage members of those cultures it excludes from education. Thus, gatekeeping in its simplest forms perpetuates social inequality without building any basis for social change. While we point to the role of intelligence testing in the education's systemic replication of existing inequalities in the social order, scholars like Paulo Freire (1972), Henry Giroux (1983), Jonathan Kozol (1991), and others indict the entire educational system that continues to supply access and barriers to the same social and ethnic groups.

Viewed from the theoretical perspective of psychometrics, educational or maximal performance tests are built upon what are considered to be relatively durable traits of the individual. Thus, in this theory, the mental trait estimated by the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) is a relatively stable part of a person's cognitive capacities. The developers of the SAT continued to maintain this position, in spite of a considerable body of evidence that suggests that coaching for the SAT can produce dramatic increases in a person's score. One basis for maintaining the position that scholastic aptitude is a stable trait was purely theoretical. If scholastic aptitude was an enduring trait in a person's mental resources, then it should not be subject to change by simple coaching. Thus, the logic upon which such tests are built is purely tautological. A test is developed to measure a trait hypothesized to be part of a person's mental endowment. Evidence that the trait exists is that the test seems to provide stable estimates of that trait over time.

A second basis for the position that assessments measure stable characteristics of individuals has to do with the fairness of the test. If a person's score could be changed by coaching, then the meaning of merit comes into question because a person's score is not just the result of an inherent mental capacity or of long years of school preparation for college study. Furthermore, the value of the tool in selecting meritorious individuals becomes immediately suspect because the kind of knowledge upon which a meritocracy has to be built must be more than can be purchased for a considerable sum and a few hours of one's time in test preparation sessions. A test whose results can be purchased is clearly unfair, even in terms of those who would build an American meritocracy. However, purchasing such results, even indirectly, reinscribes existing class structures in America—there is a statistical correlation between SAT scores and the examinee's family income. What's ironic in all of this is that the initial uses of educational assessment in the United States were hailed as undermining an American aristocracy based upon inheritance of wealth because they allowed for identification of individuals of true merit who would be encouraged to pursue education to allow them to join in the new meritocracy. A similar purpose accompanied the first use of standardized testing in China several centuries ago with the goal of identifying civil servants on the basis of their merits rather than their family or political connections. Thus, if the SAT or the ACT, which are used by nearly every college and university in America who select applicants for admission, can be affected by coaching, the very meaning of a crucial decision in many people's lives is called into question.

There is also a basic ethical principle involved here. Since the validity of psychometrically developed tests depends upon validation study from multiple perspectives, the test developers are not free to ignore challenges to their claims about the validity of an instrument, as is suggested in the following excerpts from the *Code.*

Section A, Developing/Selecting Appropriate Tests:

> Test developers should provide the information that test users need to select appropriate tests.
> Test developers should...

2. Accurately represent the characteristics, usefulness, and limitations of tests for their intended purposes...
5. Provide evidence that the test meets its intended purpose(s).

Like all of the social sciences, psychometric theory is in considerable flux, due to the general challenges from postmodern theories of subject relativity. Herrnstein and Murray (1995) represent a small and extremist view concerning the value of IQ testing. Their application of the results of IQ studies to social policy lies well beyond the boundaries of and applications for psychometrics. Both the *Code* and the *Standards* documents represent statements that aim at social equity, but are built within the context of the need for fairness, which is interpreted as a strict equality of conditions under which persons take tests and those tests are scored. The *Code* supports testing as a form of gatekeeping that is content to assess the inequalities in American culture without beginning to articulate the basis for those inequalities or to address them. A different view of assessment is built into the standards for assessment developed by the International Reading Association (IRA), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) (1994).

STANDARDS FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF READING AND WRITING

The IRA/NCTE *Standards* (1994) document contains 11 standards for developing and utilizing assessment tools for literacy in education. The standards are limited to literacy, the area of professional expertise for members of the two organizations. Standards 1, 2, and 5 are a good place to begin our discussion:

1. The interests of the student are paramount in assessment (p. 13).
2. The primary purpose of assessment is to improve teaching and learning (p. 15).
5. Assessment must be fair and equitable (p. 21).

Since standards 1 and 2 have particular salience as the first two items encountered in the document, they suggest there are two particularly important features for the use of assessment by English and reading teachers. The first is that the interests of individual students are the center of all that goes on in the classroom, including the uses of assessment. In justifying standard 1, the document focuses upon the consequences of assessment for individuals, both intended and unintended. As might be expected from teachers, whose primary mission is nurturing students through the educational system, the well-being of each and every student is to be protected at all costs. Following from that assumption, the purpose of assessment development is not to produce a set of tools that assist in a labeling or gatekeeping process to track students through the system. Assumptions about assessment include its use as a technology in service of improving the overall learning environment, as well as the opportunities for individual students to learn in that environment.

In justifying both standards, the language of the IRA/NCTE document focuses upon the notion of authentic assessment in the same way that the sanitation department's pre-employment screening test was an authentic measure of the prerequisites needed to be an effective sanitation truck attendant. In the language of the fourth standard, an assessment procedure "must recognize and reflect the intellectually and socially complex nature of reading and writing and the important roles of school, home, and society in literacy development" (1994, p. 19). Thus, indirect types of tests that segment and isolate limited subsets of literacy skills are not acceptable tools for examining the highly complex and contextualized psychological and social processes involved with literacy and literacy education. In particular, they provide too limited a view of a students' performance to truly understand how they may best be assisted in the learning environment provided by teachers' pedagogies and school and university curricula.

The fifth standard is clearly one that has the most ethical force in its statement. The meaning of fairness and equity in this standard are explained in the gloss that follows them, as relating to the fact that America is a large and diverse society made up of many cultures. IRA and NCTE clearly see assessment playing

> an important part in ensuring fairness and equity, first because it is intimately related to teaching and learning, and second because assessment is often used in an attempt to provide an impartial way of determining who should and who should not be given access to educational institutions and resources. (1994, pp. 21–22)

The CCCC Committee on Assessment's "Writing Assessment: A Position Statement" (1995) foregrounds its assumptions about language and its teaching in the initial portion of the document. In asserting that writing is always contextual, functional, related to reading, variable, and a method for learning, CCCC builds a particular version of literacy that is borne out in its three other sections that dictate what students, faculty, administrators, and legislators "should do."

It is interesting to balance this position against the one articulated by the authors of the *Bell Curve*, both of whom were trained in psychometric approaches to assessment. There are clearly two different sets of attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions. In the case of Herrnstein and Murray (1995), assessment is a tool that is to be used to select membership in the meritocracy, which requires extensive educational opportunities. For teachers, on the other hand, the primary use of assessment is to improve teaching and to provide information about individual students that will help to improve their opportunities to learn. In the case of the gatekeeping tool, assessment is to hold out those users of educational resources who are not worthy of them, on the assumption that such resources are highly limited and are best spent on those who deserve them as a result of their merit. Assessment as a tool for improving learning and teaching, on the other hand, is based on the ideal of providing learning experiences for all students that are most likely to produce "full and critical literacy in all students" (IRA/NCTE, p. 23). The CCCC's eighth assumption covers similar ground in its assumption that "the means used to test students' writing ability shapes what they, too, consider writing to be" (p. 433).

Standard 8 in the IRA/NCTE *Standards* document suggests, "The assessment process should involve multiple perspectives and data sources" (1994, p. 29). In justifying this standard, the IRA/NCTE committee writes,

> From a statistical point of view, the reliability of assessment interpretation is likely to improve when there are multiple opportunities to observe reading and writing. Adherence to this standard will also substantially improve the validity of the literacy assessment process because sampling more than one aspect of literacy permits a closer approximation of the complexity of reading, writing, listening, and speaking processes as they occur and as they are used in real-life settings.
>
> However, seeking multiple perspectives and sources of data is not simply a matter of reducing biases or errors in individual data sources. It is, rather, taking advantage of the depth of understanding that varied assessment perspectives afford and the dialogue and learning they produce. (p. 30)

The position taken by the authors of the IRA/NCTE *Standards for the Assessment of Reading and Writing* (1994) and the CCCC Position Statement (1995) rests on a broader interpretation of literacy than that afforded by similar documents used to direct the efforts of testers. This notion of literacy seems to be in conflict with the notion of reliability that is advanced by Ed White (1993) and others who would support psychometric theories in writing assessment. Reliability in assessment should not be represented within the consistency of a particular instrument. In psychometric terms, instrumental reliability is not a sufficient condition for making a valid decision about an individual, though it has traditionally been constructed as a necessary condition for validity, a position under some challenge (Moss, 1994; Williamson, 1994). Current and developing theoretical positions imply that reliability, like validity, ought to be considered a property of the decision that is being made about an individual. Thus, we would not be overly concerned about the reliability of a student's score on a single holistically scored essay as we would be about the same decision made about the student on the basis of a set of observations that might include one or more holistically scored essays and other examples of his or her writing from both formal and informal contexts. This separates, then, the test from decisions made on the basis of a test and locates the concern away from technical considerations and back to the purpose, context, and implications for the individual student.

Ultimately, this position is also supported by current psychometric theory. Samuel Messick, in his chapter, "Validity," in the *Fourth Handbook of Educational Testing* (1989), suggests that validity is not a property of a test as much as it is a property of the decision that is to be made on the basis of a test. Thus, in focusing so intently on the equality of test conditions or judgments of performance as defined by the reliability of a single procedure, we can lose sight of the much larger picture involved here. Are we making appropriate decisions about students' learning and our teaching?

Ethical uses of writing assessment dictate that we focus outward toward the students we test and the ramifications of this testing rather than inward toward the technical and statistical properties of the test itself. Regardless of the level of awareness, teachers are intimately tied up in a kind of social engineering that seeks a strict standard of social equity for all of their students. Assessment, for teachers, has to address the basic need to help them understand their students' needs as individuals and to plan for the fostering of literacy to the fullest possible extent in each of them. On the other hand, assessment development specialists are primarily interested in using modes of assessment that, through strictly equal conditions, reflect the status quo. At their best, some assessments can be used, in combination with other information, by teachers to address the needs of students. At their worst, the tendency of assessment technology to become a form of gatekeeping can work to socially engineer and perpetuate the inequalities in American society as they replicate the inequalities of an imperfect system.

CONCLUSION

We began work on this chapter with a sense that there was a conflict between the ethical perspectives of the psychometrician and the teacher of writing. Historically, there have been theoretical disputes that involved the need for the teacher of writing to avoid being bound by the limitations of multiple choice tests of writing. Since it has always been clear, as W. James Popham (1988) asserts, that evaluative uses of educational tests tends to steer the development and implementation of curriculum, writing teachers had an ethical imperative to struggle against the use of such limited and thus limiting forms of assessment. At the same time, psychometric theory was grounded in a strict, logical, positivist notion of objectivity. Thus, the psychometrician was bound to argue against the limits of direct writing assessment because it lacked the essential psychometric property of reliability and, hence, could not be shown to be fair to all examinees. This impasse indeed represents an ethical dilemma and the stridency of the rhetoric in the literature at the time reflects the sense of moral and ethical righteousness of both sides.

It may be that the main difference between teachers and testers is that assessment developers are primarily interested in observing the differences between people, while most teachers are primarily interested in helping individuals to develop. However, our acquaintance with many psychometricians suggests that they are passionately interested in the same forms of social equity that we continue to struggle for. It would be wrong to ignore the intent to call for such equity that are implicit in both the *Code* and the *Standards* documents.

On the other hand, these documents support the case developed by Herrnstein and Murray (1995) and others who would reify the achievement on a particular test beyond acceptable ethical standards adhered to by educators and most psychometricians. Here, there is a clear ideology that locates assessment as a tool to be used in support of a larger social engineering process aimed at providing what are perceived to be limited educational resources to those most in need of them. Thus, while many contemporary psychometricians, like Samuel Messick (1989), are busy freeing themselves of the last vestiges of positivism and meritocracy based upon a limited definition of American culture, there remain a number who would reify the differences that assessments uncover and privilege those differences as limits on individuals, even labeling them genetic limits, independent of the differences in individuals' ability to participate in the cultural mainstream that originate in their socioeconomic status or ethnic origin.

The new call for a meritocracy that is articulated in *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1995) is, on one face, nothing more than an enlightened return to the eugenics movement of the early part of this century, when some psychometricians advocated sterilization of members of some minority groups, people with mental problems or limits, and those incarcerated for criminal behavior, because they would only produce more mentally limited, defective, and criminally inclined offspring. It seems that the argument is for protecting the future of the society at the cost of some individuals' rights. This dilemma may ultimately be the most crucial one faced by America as we begin the next century. Democracy rests on the tension between the rights of the individual and the needs of the majority. These realities predict, we believe, the continued conflict in ethics between teachers and testers, since teachers' ethical imperative is to nurture the individual, while the test developer is focused on the good of the majority, short-sighted as we believe that attitude to be.

As strong a case as we can make about the ethical arguments behind a radical position like that advanced in the *Bell Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1995), and as much as we have tried to stress the ethical concerns of test developers and other measurement professionals, we cannot remain neutral. One of the problems, as we see it, in discussing, articulating, and promoting the ethics in writing assessment, is to ascertain who is competent to assess writing in the first place. This is a crucial determination because we have already established that the notion of ethics in a professional activity like assessment is clearly tied to notions of competency. We cannot talk about whether or not someone assesses writing ethically unless we consider his or her competence. A major problem, of course, lies in the fact that the two groups with a major interest in writing assessment define competency in different ways.

In order to support our contention that writing assessment needs to have clear and productive links to the teaching of writing, we draw upon the work of validity theorists like Lee Cronbach (1988) and Samuel Messick (1989), who contend that the validity of a test depends upon the educational value of the decisions made on the test itself. This would mean that in order to be competent, a writing assessment specialist would have to design and implement assessments that advance the teaching and learning of writing. We feel ethically inclined to note that our arguments to link competency and ethics in writing assessment to its impact on literacy education is related to our positions as English teachers who do assessment, rather than measurement professionals who do writing assessment. It is important to note, though, that such a position gains much of its support from evolving notions of validity theory, which are being developed outside of the English teaching profession.

Ultimately, we hope that this discussion leads to a more thorough treatment of writing assessment and ethics, beyond the scope available in a single article or from a specific subject position. We believe that assessment often, if not always, involves ethical considerations, and that ethics and writing assessment are an important, though neglected, area of study. Once ethics becomes an explicit area of study, it will be more difficult to advance extremist views like those in the *Bell Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1995) and based upon an implied notion of competency in assessment. It will, we hope, lead to a more ethical and equitable assessment for all students.

NOTES

[1] In the measurement literature, the term "high stakes" is often used to denote assessments with outcomes that have important ramifications for groups, individuals, or institutions. There has also been the tendency to make distinctions about whether or not an assessment is "high stakes," depending upon whether or not it reports results for individuals or limits its release of data for programmatic or institutional review. We believe it is naive, however, to underestimate or discount the influence of any assessment's impact on an individual's or group's educational opportunities and/or experiences.

[2] Unfortunately, IQ tests have a tradition of claiming the mental inferiority of nonwhite, non-Western people. It is even reported that Louis Terman, the original developer of the Stanford-Binet, manipulated the test when a specific version yielded higher scores for girls (Darling-Hammond, 1994, p. 10).

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chapter 11

Exploring Our Ethics of Evaluating Student Writing*

Jane Detweiler
University of Nevada, Reno

Jane Mathison-Fife
East Central University

Robert W. McEachern
Southern Connecticut State University

Lauren Sewell Coulter
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

The constructivist epistemologies and critical theories that have called into question notions of inherent value or meaning in texts have also destabilized notions of universal principles of "good action" or "ethics." These changes in the theoretical terrain have rendered response to student texts an even more complicated task than it had heretofore been, since it involves *both* interpretation *and* action: as writing teachers, our interpretative acts directly influence, and *can* harm, the writers with whom we work. In this chapter, we will discuss the ways in which a number of composition specialists have recognized this new ethical complexity and have called for systematic reflection on our practices of valuing in responding to student texts. To answer

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these calls, we consider discussions of ethical practice offered by scholars in other disciplines and in composition and rhetoric. Then, noting the need to examine our necessarily situated and contingent habits of evaluation, we offer one reflective method for accomplishing this ethical exploration.

CURRENT THEORIES OF ETHICAL PRACTICES

Poststructuralist theories that posit the reader's significance in constructing meaning in a text have received wide acceptance in composition theory (Belanoff, 1991; Lawson & Ryan, 1989; Miller, 1984; White, 1984), calling into question old assumptions that a certain meaning and quality is located in the text, independent of any interpretation or judgment by the reader. Moreover, poststructuralist and reader-response theories help compositionists articulate two new assumptions about reading and evaluating texts: 1) readers' individual assumptions, expectations, and experience will influence how they interpret and evaluate texts, and 2) despite individual differences, communities of readers with similar literacy training will share similar interpretive and evaluative standards for reading texts. Following the assumption that the context of reading a text will shape the meaning that the reader finds in that text, composition specialists have noted that the way teachers read student texts is qualitatively different from how they read other texts (Lawson & Ryan, 1989; Miller, 1984; Sommers, 1982; Williams, 1981). This awareness that our evaluative practice is dependent on our preconceptions and influenced by our individual contexts led compositionists to call for "reconsideration of the interpretation and evaluation practices of writing teachers" (Lawson & Ryan, 1989, p. xvi) and, in reference to our encounters with student texts, Lisa Ede (1989) urged us "to pay greater attention to the ways in which psychological, sociological, and ideological dynamics influence the reading and writing we do as teachers" (p. 155).

While our evaluation practices would appear less complicated if we could construct—and then safely rely on—a stable ethical foundation, ethicists in other disciplines have reminded us that universal theories of ethics no longer hold (Bok, 1978; Douglas, 1979; Reece & Siegal, 1986). As Reece and Siegal (1986) succinctly put it, "ethical questions are never answered perfectly and permanently" (p. ix). Despite these warnings, professional associations have continued to adopt uniform ethical standards in hopes of finding "perfect" and "permanent" solutions to the distinctly *multiform* ethical dilemmas that spring up at work. More often than not, however, these professionals soon found themselves frustrated when the elaborate codes failed to provide adequate help in making concrete ethical choices. The problem, as Sissela Bok (1978) argued, is that "codes of ethics function all too often as shields; their abstraction allows many to adhere to them while continuing their ordinary practices" (p. 246).[1] As an alternative to mandated codes of ethics, Jack Douglas (1979) suggested that professionals engage in what he called "the situated construction of the meanings of social rules" (p. 14); that is, in every situation, each individual must negotiate moral and legal problems, professional expectations for behavior, and personal beliefs to construct an ethical response for that situation. This ethical situatedness becomes particularly necessary when one realizes that as stable texts, codes of ethics are stagnant entities that cannot accommodate the constant evolution of professional situations. Neither Douglas (1979) nor Bok (1978) advocated a wholesale dismissal of community-generated ethical guidelines; rather, they would argue that codes of ethics "must be but the starting point for a broad inquiry into the ethical quandaries encountered at work" (Bok, 1978, p. 246).

In the past few years, compositionists concerned with ethics have also called for a situated approach to ethical concerns in the field,[2] among them Christy Friend (1994) and James Porter (1993). Friend (1994) applied Iris Marion Young's "nondistributive" ethics to the writing classroom, using a hypertext approach to have students examine several sides of an ethical dilemma. The result is a postmodern ethics that "move[d] beyond ethical models that ask primarily 'how many?' 'how much?' and 'which ones?' and on to visions which revel in productive conflict, change, and ever-present difference" (p. 566). Similarly, Porter (1993) argued for a "postmodern ethics of rhetoric and composition" that is "grounded in community or local standards," rather than universal principles (p. 216). Such an approach to composing would result in a composing process in which "abstract ethical precepts do not determine [composing] decisions; rather, decisions are negotiated among various sites of authority" (p. 221).

In addition to Friend's and Porter's valuable theoretical warrants for discussing ethics, Patricia Bizzell (1990) and Paul Heilker (1993) called for increased attention to more open discussions of our ethics as writing teachers. Bizzell (1990), for example, asked us to be open to discussions of our ethical authority in the classroom, not only amongst other instructors, but also with our students. And Heilker (1993) reminded us of both the difficulty and the necessity of constructing an "ethics of the personal" in the teaching of writing by recognizing the necessary subjectivity in pedagogical issues such as student–teacher relationships, evaluation, and classroom dynamics.

Similarly, in her advocacy of a feminist ethics of evaluation in composition studies, Betty Shiffman (1992) proposed a stance that—quoting Penelope (Stanley) and Susan Wolfe—"perceives the world in terms of ambiguities, pluralities, processes, continuities, and complex relationships" (qtd. in Shiffman, 1992, p. 26). However, Shiffman observed that such a stance conflicts with traditional expectations that the act of grading should be objective, creating an ethical dilemma for teachers who want to be contextual, flexible, and nurturing in response to student drafts, but feel they must be "objective" guardians of institutional standards in their grading (p. 29). Shiffman also noted that there are many possible practical solutions to the ethical quandary posed by the grading situation, but "no easy answers to this problem" (p. 30); she suggested that we "confront the complexity of the issues and reformulate ourselves as evaluators of [our] students" (p. 31).

In this piece, we take up Shiffman's (1992) challenge and "confront the complexity" of evaluation's ethical implications. Our narratives and discussions describe again and again the conflict in terms of ethical positioning posed by the usually divergent expectations for evaluations of the institution and the individual teacher or the individual student. We discuss the sense of juggling our *professional* obligations to *institutional* standards that stress objectivity and (often) the decontextualization of evaluation with our *professional* obligations to the *pedagogical* values that stress sensitivity to the specific learning needs of each writer, where evaluation stripped of its context is worth very little indeed. Our work here is an attempt to contextualize the discussion of the ethics of evaluation: our ethical questioning is grounded in the specifics of our acts of evaluation—past acts described in our reflective narratives, and present acts embodied in the group discussion of a student text. Our goal is to enrich our understanding of the ethical complexity of evaluation rather than to resolve these complexities once and for all. By articulating how our response practices intersect with these ethical dilemmas, we hope that our future evaluative practice will be enhanced by a greater ethical awareness, so we are better able to deal with the constant fluctuations that new contexts imply for a flexible, ever-adapting postmodern/feminist ethics of teaching.

As Friend (1994), Porter (1993), and Shiffman (1992) remind us, such an ethics is not static and universal, but constantly open to negotiation; further, such negotiation, through mutual exploration with other composition instructors, is necessary. Building on their theoretical explorations of ethics, we have, as Bok (1978) urged, developed a method to negotiate ethical practices from the particular experiences of everyday life:

> I believe that any method [of making ethical judgments]...should originate with the actual choices people make. It should have to look at the actual excuses they give, to themselves and to others, the arguments by which they appeal to principles, and the means by which they evaluate such arguments when others make them. To take such a path will require a search for cases, examples, descriptions of what happens. It will lead into working lives, family relationships, political practices. (pp. 54–55)

The method we describe below has allowed us to turn our reflective gaze inward, outward, and inward again in a continual search for ways to explore and negotiate this complicated ethical terrain. Following Bok, we offer "descriptions of what happens" when we explore our acts of evaluation in the context of the ethical implications of these acts.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD

To systematically examine our ethics of response to student texts, we needed a method of descriptive reflection that would illuminate our personal and collective habits of evaluation—our processes of *valuing* particular rhetorical, conventional features in texts, specific kinds of expressiveness, and certain "writers" that we (as readers) created from our ongoing impressions and interpretations of texts. For such an effort, we decided to blend some of the "introspective" and "dialogic" procedures developed from the philosophical tradition of phenomenological reflection by educators,[3] writing researchers,[4] and human scientists.[5] This "genre" of research emphasizes systematic attentiveness to the meanings a particular experience—reading a student text, for instance—holds for those who share the experience. To thoughtfully engage such an experience, phenomenological inquirers first describe the experience as directly as they are able, and then rigorously analyze the ways they express the experience, seeking answers to questions of significance: What special language do we use to make sense of that experience? How does it resonate in our personal and collective memories? What essential qualities of humanness does this experience reveal?

Like earlier phenomenological researchers such as Patricia Carini (1975, 1982) and Margaret Himley (1991), we wished to use reflective reading procedures to "invent and reinvent ourselves as a group and as individuals, to make visible the beliefs and attitudes we held, to define our roles in the academic place" (Himley, 1991, p. 85) as we tried to discover our own ethics of evaluation in our reading of a sample student text. However, to further explicate our personal and communal values, we completed our reflections on a student text with reflections on *our own texts.* In so doing, we hoped to focus more closely on our personal and shared "ethics" of evaluation, which would be apparent in the meanings we made of our experience as responders to student texts, both past and present. What follows is a brief outline of our approach, then the "results" of our study, framed as documentary anecdotes of ourselves as responders. Based on this "reflective moment" in our ongoing self-study, we then offer some remarks in closing.

PROCEDURES

Reflective Narratives

As with much phenomenological inquiry, the first focus for our reflections was experiential narrative: what Van Manen (1990) calls "protocol writing, or lived-experience descriptions" (p. 62). We each wrote an autobiographical account of our experiences as responders to student writing, shaping our narratives around the episodes that evoked the concrete, historical particulars with which we gave memory and meaning to the activity of evaluating student texts. This process underscores the importance of narrative in phenomenological practice; the sharing of experiential narrative requires writerly choices: the necessary selections, exclusions, and other narrative devices with which writers reveal their evaluations of the world they experience (Summerfield, 1994). To complement this introspective research mode, we systematically read and discussed our narratives as described below, adding, as Barbara Gleason (1993) noted, "a social dimension to an approach that some would criticize for being too solipsistic" (p. 67).

Reflective Readings of Experiential Narratives

After writing the narrative accounts, we then engaged in collective reflection, or "deep talk." Adapting the practices used by Himley (1991), we systematically read and discussed, as concretely as we were able, the textual features in our individual accounts that evoked personal patterns of preference and expressiveness. In each case, we began by reading the entire text aloud, taking turns with portions so that we might hear the text spoken in our various voices, with our inherently different inflections, accents, and intonations. Next, we took up small portions of the text serially, reading aloud and describing textual, thematic, linguistic, stylistic, generic, and rhetorical features of that passage. Systematically, each member of the group responded to the passage, adding further interpretations and explications of the text, echoes and variations of one another's observations, to the ongoing discussion. The person whose narrative was being read served as notetaker, or "chair," writing down key quotes, images, and themes from each group member, making visual connections between ideas when possible. Periodically, the notetaker would comment on the responses thus far, distilling these into an observation that was "neither a summary nor a reiteration, but rather a restatement that highlights themes and motifs, using as much as possible the actual language and images offered by individual participants" (Himley, 1991, pp. 35–36).

Our readings of our own narratives focused more intensively on evoking the meanings that the activity of responding to student texts held for each of us; thus, our explications encompassed not only specific textual effects and "content," but also, for example, how a writer's arrangement of particular episodes spoke to what we knew of that "person," the ensemble of expressive choices with which we enact ourselves and recognize each other.

Reflective Reading of a Sample Student Paper

To further explore our ethics of evaluation "in action," we repeated the "reflective reading" process described above, this time using a sample student paper (see Figure 11.1), a practice that follows more closely with Himley's (1991) approach. Again, we took turns reading parts of the paper aloud, responding to particular textual features, themes, and images. Throughout the reading of the student text (as with our "narrative" readings), earlier reflections informed later readings, building a collective "sense" of our individual and shared values. As Himley puts it, this effort of reading a text,

> describing it over and over again, layering text on text, experimenting with the right nuances, hearing the different discourses of various readers—all the language use creates a network of meaning, organized not as abstracted or second-order or even totalizing generalizations, but rather as patterns generated by and through the talk. This descriptive knowledge then remains tied closely to the particular student, text, context, moment, group of readers, while opening up into the universe. (p. 13)

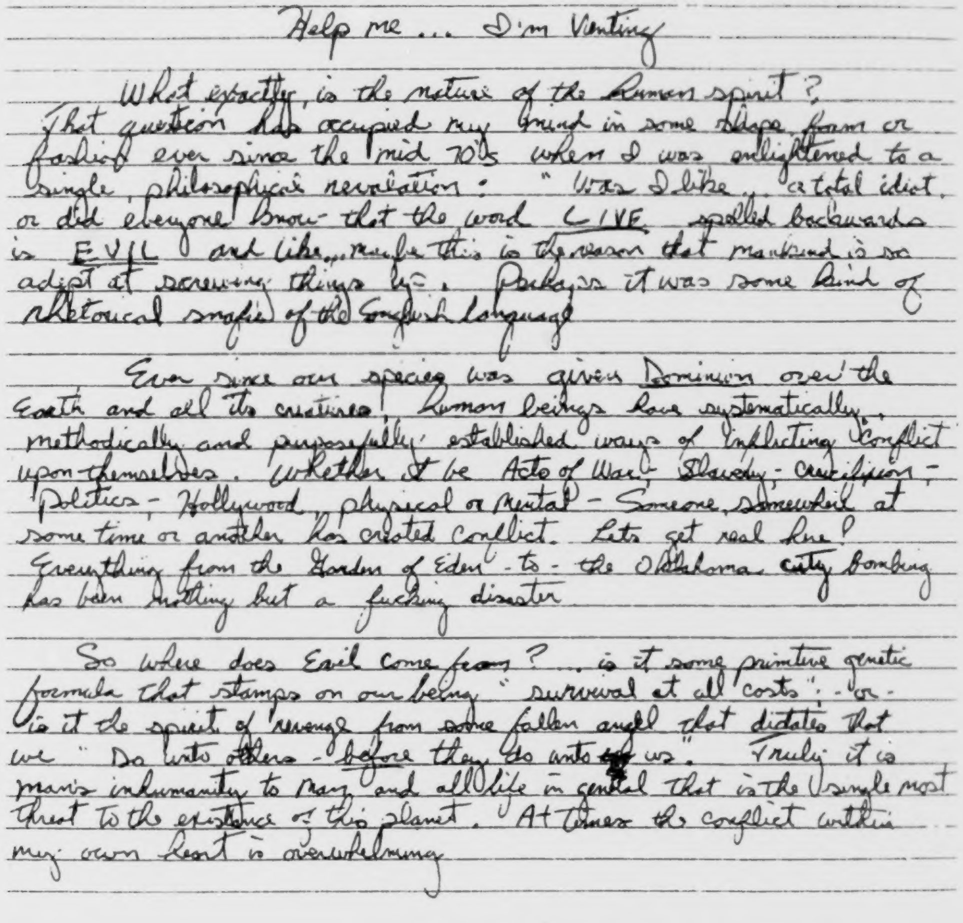
In this fashion, we documented ourselves as responders to students and their texts, providing ourselves the materials for further reflection and the construction of the brief documentary descriptions that we offer below.

Documentary Anecdotes

As a last gesture in this particular inquiry, a reflective pause in the ongoing inquiry of our teaching practice, we composed the following distillations that encapsulate our individual "findings" from this collaborative study. Following Carini (1982), we call these "documentary anecdotes" to distinguish them from the more familiar "case studies."[6] Each member of the group, using notes and transcriptions from the various reflective sessions, described the knowledge he or she had gained about his or her "ethics of evaluation." These descriptions are necessarily quite condensed for presentation in this forum; even so, as "works," these writings reflect (upon) the writer-researcher who crafted them.[7]

Jane Detweiler: "Responding to Student, Writing"

Over the course of the group's reflections on my narrative, impressions seemed to coalesce into one significant complementarity that expressed my relationships to students *and* their texts—my "respond-abilities," as one reader put it. In my story of "responding to students and their texts," recollections of teacher responses I had experienced as a student and of *my own* practice as a writing teacher were threaded together by an ongoing investigation of "structure," a quest for considered balance of the "fixed" and "fluid" qualities with which I expressed various dimensions of my experience.



Help me ... I'm Venting

What exactly, is the nature of the human spirit? That question has occupied my mind in some shape, form or fashion ever since the mid 70's when I was enlightened to a single, philosophical revelation: "Was I like, a total idiot, or did everyone know that the word LIVE spelled backwards is EVIL and like... maybe this is the reason that mankind is so adept at screwing things up. Perhaps it was some kind of rhetorical snafu of the English language

Ever since our species was given Dominion over the Earth and all its creatures, human beings have systematically, methodically and purposefully established ways of inflicting conflict upon themselves. Whether it be Acts of War - Slavery - crucifixion - Politics - Hollywood, physical or mental - Someone, somewhere at some time or another has created conflict. Lets get real here! Everything from the Garden of Eden - to - the Oklahoma City bombing has been nothing but a fucking disaster

So where does Evil come from? ... is it some primitive genetic formula that stamps on our being "survival at all costs" - or - is it the spirit of revenge from some fallen angel that dictates that we "Do unto others - before they do unto us". Truly it is man's inhumanity to man and all life in general that is the single most threat to the existence of this planet. At times the conflict within my own heart is overwhelming

Figure 11.1

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Notions of "fixedness" nearly always emerged as "structural" attributes that I connote negatively when they dominate teaching collectives, pedagogical relationships, or understandings of textual practices. For instance, the group commented on a series of contrasting episodes: after presenting a positive experience of a more "student-centered," elementary-school learning environment, which I rendered with a scene of a teacher's "flexible" response to my own writing projects, I offered another scene in which a college professor too-vigorously-imposed "rigid" standards as to the grammatical and stylistic structures that ought to be perfected in my texts. In each of these cases, the activity of creating texts was intricately linked to that of creating relationships: the "fluid" qualities of "sensitivity" and "responsiveness" in the primary teacher's habits of relating to me and my work linked intricately with an emerging sense of text-forming as "self-guided exploration," "play and conversation"; the "fixed" qualities the college professor seemed to perceive in texts also played into the "hierarchical" and "painfully directive" quality of this teacher's relation to me.

The contrastive thematic developed in these early "scenes" also resonated through later experiences from my early and more recent experience as a writing teacher. These portions of the narrative recounted my reactions to (and subversions of) an academic community replete with "requirements" for new teachers ("required" repeatedly appeared as the adjective preceding my mention of texts, syllabi, number and kinds of assignments, applications of process pedagogy, and "no-revision" policy, among other programmatic features I catalogued at length) and my later adaptations to a looser, freer, "more trusting" program administration. In the early "fixed" teaching episodes, again, the group noted that the constraining "grading" teacher–student relationship framed by the heavily "bureaucratically structured" program was aligned with negative constructions of the "fixedness" and "givenness" of the written conventions I was "required" to mention as I "justified grades" in a "formulaic" way: my evaluative response was limited to "counting up mechanical errors" and other flaws in students' performance of a clearly defined and stable generic "formal essay."

"More recent" episodes related my implementation of a self-designed, and thus more "flexible," writing course. Here, the narrative evoked impressions of rewarding "fluid relationships" with students made possible by an "interpretive" pedagogy, in which these writers and I "examined, experimented, and played with generic conventions." As to the qualities of my response to students and their writing, the group noted my emphasis on "writers' choices" and ownership of their "projects," which reflected a "consultant" attitude and stance carried over from my pre-grad school work as a technical writer and editor. This "advisory" sort of expertise carried with it a certain "fluid" humility and uncertainty, which was apparent in my self-portrayal as a teacher willing to "not [be] sure" about the "correctness" of written conventions,[8] which I understood and explained to students as "social expectations" to be negotiated and struggled with in the "tough work" writing tends to be.

The last, "most recent" sections of the narrative were reflections on how my "flexible" approach seemed to have actually made this "tough work" even tougher for some students. In this little "failure story," these writers preferred a "more structured" learning environment than I was providing—which was, of course, the sort of learning environment where I felt most comfortable as a student and a teacher. The group observed that, paradoxically, here being "fluid" and responsive to the needs of individual students seemed to mean being more explicitly, "structurally" directive and "limiting the expectations" for them, while avoiding response that is merely "grading" and "closing down the possibilities" for each student and each text.

When my colleagues and I turned the reflective glance outward again in our effort to describe the anonymous student text, I saw again the as-yet-unresolved, productive tension of my "fixed" and "fluid" response style. From the transcripts, I noted that at various points in our deep talk, I tossed around various generic forms or structures that the writer might be playing with or "trying for" in what I considered a very early draft. Since the writer relied heavily on pronounced cadences and refrains, affective (even expletive) language, and declarative sentences, I repeatedly, tentatively considered the text as evolving toward some version of a strongly personal and argumentative essay—"a polemic," perhaps. It seemed to me that the text suggested this writer was available for instruction in harnessing what were apparently deeply held convictions, and in reshaping the currently uneven shifts from areas of "explanatory" approach to those of more "polemical" purposes. "One or the other," I remarked as I pointed out the creaky joints between the divergent impulses I found in the text, sustaining them all was just not working at present.

And, as we discussed portions of the text, I used as templates various generic structures familiar to me, juggling them with and against passages of the writer's prose, turning them like puzzle pieces, seeking good potential "fits" that resembled—or *could* resemble—the text and the writer's project I had before me. Even as I did so, I wondered aloud whether the writer would agree with me about what I saw as productive "argumentative" possibilities, whether past teachers' injunctions to "be reasonable" motivated the text's apparent moves to a more moderate "explanatory" stance, whether at the last minute, the writer had changed direction and I had missed the turn. Were my attempts to find a "fit" merely efforts to "fix" the writer's text—make it fit, make it stay in a form *I* recognized and appreciated? Unless I could actually speak with the writer, make this unknown writer known, I had little chance of coming to rest on any of the issues tugging restlessly at my readerly consciousness.

In the reflections of the group, and in this response to a student text, I see my irresolutions, my "tossing around" of textual genres, as ways of understanding potential projects in texts, as necessary processes of my pedagogy: in *almost* but never quite coming to rest, in achieving only tentative, approximate answers for a given moment, I fulfill an ongoing "respond-ability" to students and their texts.

Jane Mathison-Fife: Re-evaluating My Role as Evaluator

The group's reflective conversation on my response narrative focused on my attitude about my role as responder. My description of learning to respond to and evaluate student texts in my teacher training course and as a new teacher was characterized by words like "burden" and "responsibility." The group commented on the almost painful sense of "performance anxiety" and "high expectations" for myself that my narrative reflected. My description of response and evaluation sounded to them like a "serious business." I felt I had to master quickly these response and evaluation skills in order to be a good teacher. Group members noticed an opposition around which my description of my early response practice was structured: the goal of encouraging student choice in the revision process versus the feeling that I should offer "expert" advice to my students.

As I described additional experience as a responder, group members noticed that expressions of "feeling" rather than "thinking" (like, "getting a feel for") grew in frequency as I described an increase in my confidence about my ability to respond well. Group members also noticed an increase in my description of response as contextual, with my focus shifting from responding "to the text" to responding "to the student" with my use of portfolios and focus on encouraging student self-evaluation.

The focal point in my narrative is the "insight" that I gain about responding in order to facilitate self-evaluation skills in the student. While observing a colleague respond in writing to student papers during a collaborative research project, I noticed that she responded directly to the student *about* the concerns he raised in his reflective memo, not only and primarily about her perceptions of the text. I reasoned, in my narrative, that "if I really wanted to help students improve their self-evaluation skills, then I need to comment explicitly on their acts of self-evaluation." I explained that I wanted to cultivate a response style that reflected my "respect for my students as thinkers, writers, judges of their own writing, a style that really engages them in the response and evaluation conversation rather than distancing them from it." The group commented on my increased characterization of the response situation as a "conversation" rather than a "burden" or "duty" that was all my responsibility.

I also began to connect this style of response with my experience as a student and a way that I would like to be responded to. I related in my narrative how I submitted reflective letters with texts even when my professor did not ask for self-assessments: by "pointing out the shortcomings I saw upon a rereading" I wanted to force him to "remark on my remarking." This strategy resulted in his agreeing with my assessments and complimenting me on being "such an acute reader" of my own work. Group members noted that my description of this self-evaluative practice leads to "a more powerful place to operate from as a writer." They pointed out that this new model of response practice that I value "moves away from placing a student in a position of less power and experience" and conceptualizes "evaluation as sharing evaluation" through a conversation about evaluation—"meta-commentary, commenting on commenting." A member of the group observed that my new attitude about the response situation has resulted in a "lifting of pressure" and "less performance anxiety" in the way I talk about my role as responder. The need to be a "perfect responder" falls away when I no longer see myself as *the* "key figure" in the response/evaluation situation.

This concern with my newly felt responsibility to encourage student self-evaluation by involving students in my acts of evaluation also emerged in our group discussions of a student's text. During our session, I realized how difficult it was for me to respond comfortably to this student's text without any access to his reflective self-evaluation of his own writing. In our session reflecting on the student's paper, I also noticed a quality I saw in the text that I value in writing: "the feeling of real emotional connection here." As he pondered how to deal with the existence of evil in the world, how to live with his recognition that "human beings have systematically, methodically, and purposefully established ways of inflicting conflict upon themselves," he was, I noted, trying to connect with "these big things out there...instead of only feeling like this is out of my control, I'll try to put it out of my mind." I noted that his last sentence, "At times the conflict within my own heart is overwhelming," struck me as the "kind of engaged writing about a subject that [shows that] a student really sees that there are big odds there." At this point in the session, I realized how crucial response to this kind of writing is to my sense of what I should be doing as a teacher: this conveyed sense of "big things at stake...make[s] me say to students in situations like this, 'It is really great that you are taking this on and that you are trying to write about important things like this that are...meaningful to you...one of the ways we can maybe try and make this world a better place is by talking about this, people who care talking and writing about this.'" If one of my most important goals as a teacher is to encourage this kind of connection between self and the world through writing, then the very process of responding to and evaluating student writing should involve students in that evaluation, offering them yet another way to be engaged with their writing.

Bob McEachern: Teachers, Do *Let Your Students Group Up to be "Cowboys"*

The group began with a discussion of the three brief stories with which I began my narrative, stories detailing certain experiences with program and school administrations, on the issue of grading. In the first, a writing program director encouraged those of us in the program to give "Fs"; in the second, a law school administrator told me to lower the grades I'd given, or he'd do it for me (he did); and in the third, Vivian, a student at an urban university who worked hard for an "A" in my class was then accused of cheating by the administration, and was required to get a letter from me saying she deserved the grade.

The group pointed out that in writing these stories, I highlighted my ambivalent relationship to "program standards" and my confusion over just who I was grading for. They noted that the administrations seemed to have a "lack of trust" in me and other teachers, in our ability to "grade properly," according to "fixed standards." The administrations seemed more interested in "trying to change the teacher than in trying to change the 'situation' of students in danger of failing: what's important is keeping the status quo, so that 'students who improve,' like Vivian, 'are suspect.'"

I framed this discussion around the image of "The Cowboy," whom I described as "living in the world, but apart from it." In discussing my narrative, I expressed to the group my apprehension at using this metaphor; I was, and still am, all too aware of the cultural implications of "The Cowboy." My Cowboy, though, according to one group member, is different: not a "laid back, straw chewing" Cowboy, but "a BOLD Cowboy," one who "flaunts Cowboy values." Those valued include a concern for (I extended the metaphor) "my livestock," the students I teach and grade. I'm training them to "jump the fence"—to *not* be livestock, herded by an administration who doesn't know (and doesn't want to know) their names and faces (since "grading is easier when human concerns are ignored"), but to be "Cowboys and Cowgirls" themselves.

The stories with which I began illustrate as well a concern with evaluation as a "human transaction," since I consulted the students in the law class before making my decision, and I wanted to stay in touch with Vivian. Such concern with individuals and their lives, the group noted, is an important part of my evaluation process, but one that administrations try to avoid, since "human relationships cloud your judgment."

The group saw my attempt to balance the concerns of students and the demands of administration come out in the final section of my narrative, in which I discussed how my "Cowboy values" influence my evaluation practice. I discussed my early expressivist-influenced pedagogy, which valued an undefined "uniqueness" in student writing. The group saw my discussion of expressivism as "recognizing its inadequacy in addressing the complexities of student writing." Rather than value "uniqueness," I moved toward helping students understand the academic context in which they write. What I value is not that which is "unique," but rather that which demonstrates an understanding of context and one's place within it. I gave the example of Allison, who wrote two papers for me for the same assignment: one a "straight" academic piece, and one a "tirade" (Allison's word), blending academic convention with her personal views, experiences, and annoyances on the topic. I valued the second version more, since it "blended conventions" and "took chances."

My Cowboy values here are a desire to help students "negotiate their place in the academy" (or whatever contexts they set themselves in). I want them to learn to "jump the fence," to, in the words of the group, "teach students to negotiate being in the confines, just as [I negotiate confines] as a teacher."

When the group read the sample student paper together, I found myself pointing to metaphors and images dealing with "the military" and with "religion," two more institutional contexts. I felt, though, that the student felt out of control. My suggestion was to include himself somewhere in the paper, and for three reasons: first, because "I want to hear more about him, and...that would give me a...way in" ("Evaluation is human transaction"); second, because given the nature of the assignment, "personal examples of how all this evil has affected his life would make for more interesting reading" ("Learn to jump the fence"); and finally, because by adding his own experience, "he might gain some control over it" (and become a Cowboy himself).

In addition to the Cowboy metaphor, the group pointed out other "value-laden" images I'd used, referring to both "David fighting the administrative Goliath" and my reference to a "quest," call up images of "right versus might" and the "search for something honorable": if evaluation is to be more than simply a matter of administrative convenience, it depends deeply on valuing students as people.

Lauren Sewell Coulter: Institution versus Intuition, or "Grading" versus "Teaching"

As the group discussed my narrative—an untitled, unsure-of-where-it-was-going personal reflection on my experience of the word *evaluation*—participants noted the anxiety I felt about where to place my evaluation loyalties. On one hand, I seemed to have a keen sense of responsibility to the institution for whom I was a representative. But I also wanted to express a "respond-ability" to students as individuals who all need different kinds of attention from a teacher. In this loose dichotomy, "grading" was always associated with this institutional responsibility, while "teaching" and "responding" to students and their writing grew out of my desire to develop environments for learning with students.

According to the group's reflection on my narrative, the most striking evidence of this struggle between loyalties occurred in the metaphors I chose, especially the business and military metaphors I used to discuss institutional obligations. The group noted that I described myself as having "signed on" as a teaching assistant rather than saying I simply "began teaching," and when the time came to put grades on student texts, I spent all night "stacking them in piles of "As," "Bs," and "Cs," much like sorting tobacco into grades. My post-grading relationships with students became adversarial: I consulted the "veteran TAs" for advice about how to return graded papers, then waited for "militan[t]" students to come "marching" into my office "ready for war." The group also commented that this kind of adversarial positioning led to what they called "defensive grading"—I would spend hours agonizing over grades and my accompanying justifications in hopes of avoiding a confrontation with students.

My narrative describes the act of grading as an impossible struggle to find one "perfect" response to each student text. And in the sections of the narrative in which I talk about "grading," I paint a portrait of an "inauthentic" teacher who sees the act of grading as "rotten," an "unbearable" "ruse." Even inviting students to become agents in the act of grading by collaborating with me to design the grading criteria for final portfolios does not eliminate the "element of smarminess." The resulting anxiety manifested itself as "stress," "guilt," and "painful" moments for both myself and my students.

In contrast to the rigidity demanded by the institutional mandate to grade, the group observed that in my narrative I spoke of teaching, responding and evaluating (without grades) as a pleasant, intuitive process built on immediacy and connection with students—what the group came to call "anti-stacking" impulses to distinguish them from the paper-stacking I did when I first began to grade. Unlike grading, responding to writing is an anti-stacking practice that is "fun, a joy really." That part of teaching is rewarding to me, for it enables me to think that I am "helping...people become better writers." I confessed in the narrative that now, as a more experienced teacher, I find myself relying on "good ol' intuition" when I must put a grade on a student text. This felt sense about what grade a text deserves comes from a "gut feeling" about the student's cumulative work as a writer, a feeling built on innumerable hours of oral and written exchange with the student. I wrote in the narrative that "I resist grading by intuition." Reflecting on this statement and descriptions of my "intuitive" relationships with students, the group suggested that perhaps what I *really* resist is allowing more powerful institutional representatives to know that their institutional mission is being carried out not always by rigid rules, but by flexible, intuitive impulses.

The transcripts of the group's reflection on an anonymous student text entitled "Help Me...I'm Venting" (Figure 11.1) point to my preference for contextualized and intuitive responses to student writing. Near the beginning of our reflection, I commented that it was difficult for me to find a way to respond to this text—three paragraphs of musing on "the nature of the human spirit" and "man's inhumanity to man"—because on the surface it appeared so abstract and disengaged from the *writer's* experience of these issues that I simply could not "grab ahold of it at all." I confessed to the group members my need for a contextualized response: "I don't think I could respond to this [text] without talking to this man.... I would want to have a conversation about what he was thinking about that didn't make it to the page, just to get a sense of where he is coming from." Any response I made to the writer without first talking to him about his hopes for the text would be "unhelpful." In this case, I believed that the standard teacherly advice of "pick the kernel of text most important to you" and going with that "doesn't seem to do...justice" to the passion and complexity of thought expressed in the complete text. Without having a writing "history" with this student, as I develop with my own students, I found myself nearly unable to respond "blind." Without more knowledge about who this writer is, what his fears and goals are, I would again feel inauthentic if I used what one participant called a "teacher's cliché" to respond to this thoughtful, struggling writer.

In discovering how much difficulty I had trying to formulate a response to our faceless student text, I was reminded of what the group noted about my own ethics of evaluation: Despite institutional demands for grading, the best teaching I can do seems to have little to do with grading and everything to do with an individual, situated, intuitive response to a *writer* writing.

CONCLUSION

What insight can we draw from these narratives, conversations, and "anecdotes"? This phenomenological method is process-oriented and hard to encapsulate in a concise report. Part of the value is the community-building work accomplished and the shared insight gained from engaging in the process itself, rather than producing final documents like these anecdotes that offer conclusive "findings." Ideally, these anecdotes would be situated in many other texts produced throughout this process: our individual narratives; the student text; and our conversations about these texts. Our goal in preparing these documentary anecdotes after the "deep talk" about our narratives and the student text is to evoke and describe rather than to prescribe.

We are aware of the limitations on the claims we can make for this method. Instead of leading to a codified, communally-agreed-upon set of ethical principles and practices for evaluation and response, this method can be part of ongoing theoretical and practical conversations about the intersections of our individual and collective values as teachers and evaluators of student writing. The strength of this method is its combination of the reflective and introspective tasks of narrative writing and articulation of individual practices with the "deep talk" that situates these particulars within collective and social perspectives; making public our personal reflections adds a richer, situated self-awareness to our introspective acts.

However, the value of this method does not end with the self-awareness it can offer us. Rather, this self-awareness is the starting point for individual ethical action. The response situation is so ethically complex because it involves so many stakeholders (the student, the teacher, departmental or program administrators, the school as a whole) with differing ideas of what is "at stake"—a student's grade and very attitude toward writing; a teacher's personal pedagogical philosophy and goals and reputation with colleagues; departmental and institutional goals and standards. Reflecting on our position in relation to these often contradictory expectations allows our future practice to be informed with a clearer sense of our ethical responsibilities than we might otherwise have. These reflections can prepare us to engage in personal (or collective), ethical problem solving by determining how our response practice can balance our multiple responsibilities to best be an extension of our values.

Ethically informed practice needs a component of reflection to bring together an articulation of personal values with a description of personal practice to recognize how we can work toward a better fit between the two. In the following section, we each share how the awareness arrived at through our narratives and reflective conversations has influenced our thought and action related to valuing, evaluating, and responding to student writing over the last year. We hope this closing section might illustrate concretely how our practice (past and present—in our narratives and reading of the student text) formed the basis for our reflection on ethics that in turn has informed our practice.

AFTERWORD

Jane Detweiler

In the many months since our group reflected on that anonymous student text, I have taken a position at another university and had the opportunity to work with writers of varied experience. I have developed and taught courses that are "firsts" for me: an "honors" first-year theme course; an advanced nonfiction writing course in which undergraduates and graduates enrolled; and graduate seminars in methods of composition research and in narrative theories. Through these efforts, I have carried with me the memory of a writer I never met, and the productive uncertainty that reading his text helped me to better understand.

In retrospect, I now see that I have also carried with me a stronger sense of how my own work as a writer informs the way that I engage texts. Our ethical inquiry had certainly foregrounded how the experience of particular teachers' reactions to my texts had influenced my evaluation: my recounting of these learning events in a personal narrative had taken shape, as I chuckled later, as a sort of collection of those moments when one observes (with vehemence), "Well, I'm not going to do *that* when I grow up." As well, the group's reflections honed my insight into how notions of "fixedness" and "fluidity" play through my actions as an evaluator of texts. I have since encountered writers in the classroom who, I note upon reflection, tend to engender strong versions of one or the other of these response patterns. One student will seem to me to be floundering in the freedom of wide-open assignments; another struggles with her audience, and appears hell-bent on throwing off even the most minimal constraints of convention; still another will crave strict direction one moment, complete latitude the next. More often now, I respond reflectively to each sort of writer, moderating my own impulse to get an immediate "fix" on their process and purpose, to treat them all as if their needs are the same. I still wrestle, however, with how an equitable classroom and an ethical mode of evaluation might be construed, enacted, refined, and maintained.

My wrestling has most recently taken the form of ongoing experiments with contract grading and student-designed projects, which I have found to change the emphasis of my evaluation significantly. What has proven to be the key insight provided by the group's research into "our ethics of response" is that my strategies as a reader and a writer are profoundly similar. On its face, this would seem an obvious, commonsense observation. But the precise contours and implications of the similarity escaped me until the point at which my colleagues and I took up my reflective narrative, then an unknown writer's text, as topics for rigorous conversation. At that point and since, I have had to confront my pedagogy's heavy emphasis on analysis, imitation, and adaptation of formal models—which have always been strong suits for me, and terribly difficult for various of the writers in the classes I teach.

Further, I have had to examine what my reliance on generic conventions *as a reader and evaluator* might mean as I move into new positions of greater authority over the writing of others. As I mentally fan out the model-templates like cards, matching written shapes to the intentions I interpret down there on the table, in those pages of John's text I riffle through, am I closing possibilities that my pet forms cannot let me see? Since I have only my experience and theories to go on—and my theories suggest I cannot fully set aside the deck of conceptualizations and experiential knowledge I have thus far accumulated—should I not risk foreclosing some possibilities for writers like Trace, to help them to craft others more compelling and powerful? An answer, once and for all, would certainly be soothing; I can argue and have argued endlessly the position warranting each question with equal professional passion, leaving myself worn and perplexed.

There is still no coming to rest, it seems. And so I take out my documentary anecdote and underscore its final phrases. I cut these out and slip them under the glass on my desk, where I will in a matter of hours take up another pile of texts, another set of individual cases to consider, as I continue to formulate my ethics of responding to student texts. There, in conference at my desk, or at the boardroom table bulking in the room where our class meets, I will meet each student, learning from the texts that he or she writes where our separate and mutual projects might meet. It is by maintaining reflective awareness of how our life-works cannot but inform one another that I continue the research my colleagues and I began a long while ago, in the heat of a Louisville summer. My findings yet reveal no broad conclusions; I can offer only further anecdotes, upon which I am building a "response-able" practice.

Pull up a chair and I'll share a few.

Jane Mathison-Fife

Since our reflective conversations, I have been on fellowship and haven't taught until this semester; however, my expression of what is important to me in valuing and responding to student writing have been important in my research. Emotional engagement and exploring connections between self and society through writing are still qualities that I value highly in writing—my own and other people's. My recent research focuses in part on the nature of this engagement in student writing—the kind of engagement that I saw in that anonymous student text. My understanding about what makes worthwhile social critique has expanded to include an emotional connection or commitment. I see my emotional commitment as an important component of or prerequisite for agency, and I feel it is my ethical duty to enable it in others—in addition to skills of critique—through my research and teaching.

Related to this commitment that I want to encourage through my response to student writing is the connection writers need to feel to their writing throughout the response and evaluation process. The importance of including a student's self-evaluation in the response process that I commented on in my narrative written for our reflective conversation (and in that conversation) has become a focus of the research project that I am involved in with my colleague Peggy O'Neill (the person whose response practice I described in my documentary anecdote as making me realize the importance of valuing student self-evaluation in our responses). Envisioning the response situation as beginning with students' acts of self-evaluation has been an important focus for us, leading us to call for research on response to include the students' contribution to the evaluation/response conversation instead of seeing response as beginning with the teacher's comments. Acts of evaluation that include the students' goals and self-assessments can connect students to the process of evaluation—and to their writing—instead of making them feel distanced from both evaluation and their writing.

As I get back in the classroom again this semester, I take up the challenge of applying this philosophy to my own teaching. Reading students' initial statements about their goals for improving their writing and what they value in effective writing is exciting: now more than ever before I feel that I am encouraging students to be evaluators of their own writing, to practice this essential writerly skill. I realized, however, that facilitating students' confidence to take part in a real conversation about their writing can pose challenges for me ethically as well as pedagogically. Inviting my students to participate in an ongoing conversation of and *about* evaluation means adding more contextual variables to the evaluation situation. The situated evaluation is what I value; but, because it requires continual awareness and adaptation, I know better than to expect it be simple.

Bob McEachern

Upon reflecting on my "documentary anecdote," I tried to think about the ways I have continued to "evaluate," or "find value in" student writing, particularly in terms of what I had then called "Cowboy/Cowgirl values," a desire to help students understand the context in which they write so as not to be "penned into it." When I had written that documentary account, I valued student writing that displayed some awareness of the situation.

I still value those things, but have come to understand how increasingly difficult they are for students. Allison, the student I described originally, was in an honors class, and was confident enough in her abilities to be able to hand in two versions of a paper, one a "tirade," as she labeled it, and the other more "traditional" and "academic." As I write, I am finishing a semester of teaching basic writers—underprepared, underconfident, and somewhat resentful at having to take a noncredit writing course. How can I possibly hold these students to the same "Cowboy/Cowgirl" standards of Allison and the other honors students (particularly since part of my approach involves working actively to understand the circumstances from which students come to college writing)? In addition to their underconfidence, there is also a suspicion of English teachers and their red pens: any attempts at trying to get them to "break beyond the pens" of academia are met with looks that say, "Yeah, sure. Take a chance? You're just setting me up to knock me down."

(I couldn't help but think of the last time I taught Basic Writing, five years ago, at a different school. A student came to me for a conference, and I went on too long, too enthusiastically about why I was teaching them what I was teaching them. I ended my diatribe with, "Can't you see? I'm giving you your freedom!" The student, on the verge of curling up into a fetal position, asked me weakly, "Does that mean I can leave now?" I'm more subtle these days—working toward the same goals, but using, I think, more friendly methods.)

In my original reflective narrative (not published here), I cited Kenneth Burke's observation that, depending on one's point of view, the shepherd can be seen as either pro-sheep because he protects them, or as anti-sheep because he does so only to fatten them up for slaughter. I don't like being in the position of being a shepherd, and I don't have a clear "answer" for how I've put my ethics into action. This *is* the action. It's the struggling, the balancing, the negotiating, and the hoping that I'm doing the right thing.

Lauren Sewell Coulter

It's been 18 months now since the four of us gathered to reflect on "Help Me...I'm Venting" (see Figure 11.1), yet I'm struck by how much that experience continues to frame my "ethics of evaluation." An abbreviated, internal version of the reflective reading method, which makes my response to a text more mindful and allows me to see more clearly how I construct my responses to both student texts *and* the writers of those texts, has guided me as a responder and evaluator in at least two concrete ways since.

First, I have discovered that my responses to student writing are always more useful to the students when I respond in context, and thus, I have become insistent that students write a reflective memo to accompany every draft for which they want my response. I have long encouraged students to write reflective memos with their drafts for their own good as writers, but only after the reflective reading session did I see how their memos helped *me* be a better responder for them. These days, I downright refuse to read a paper without some contextualizing information—either a memo or a short conference about the writer's hopes for the draft. And while not all students see the value of such reflection—a few still refer to it as "busywork"—many understand it and appreciate the contextualized response it enables.

Second, I have come to see my ethics of evaluation as a situated one that always involves my consideration of the students' writing and learning context. The case of my student, "Amanda," provides an illustrative example. Late in the semester, Amanda exploded at me in frustration, saying that she couldn't begin to evaluate the strength of her own writing for the course, something I required students to include in the portfolio cover letter. I started instinctively to give my speech about how we'd been doing that all along, then I caught myself and stopped. It suddenly occurred to me that in this class, students had not been doing the level of self- and group-evaluation I expected in the cover letter. Despite my attempts to coach them through it, give them prompts for responding, and model constructive kinds of responding, the students in that class had not seemed interested in learning to respond very well. Unlike any of her fellow students in that section, Amanda had come to every class meeting, brought a draft to every meeting, and honestly made an attempt to respond to others' papers, even though she was not very well-equipped to do so—and frankly, some nights she had very little to work with since other students often brought in meager drafts. If I really believe that students are teachers for each other in my courses, then I have to admit that despite her effort to do well, Amanda did not get the same quality of instruction as students in my other section. Given this situation, I could not justify using the same standards to evaluate Amanda's work as I did to evaluate that of students in the other section. Amanda received a "B" in that course, though I know had she turned in the same work as a member of the more challenging section, she probably would have earned only a "C."

This kind of intuitive evaluation is in direct conflict with institutional demands for establishing specific evaluation criteria and measuring each student against those in an attempt to be "fair" and "rigorous." For me, though, evaluation is messy business, and Amanda's case demonstrates that an individual, situated, intuitive response to a *writer* writing is always the most ethical one for me.

NOTES

[1] The case of the American Psychological Association provides an illustrative example. In 1992, after more than six years of drafting and revising, the APA published a substantially revised professional code of ethics. Though the draft went through several drafts, all of which incorporated feedback from the professional community, the entire November 1994 issue of *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* is devoted to critiques of the current code. These critiques, all written by acknowledged experts in their respective subspecialties, outline a number of problems with the code: most notably, it protects the profession at the expense of the consumer (Payton, 1994; Vasquez, 1994); it lacks enforceability (Vasquez, 1994); it fails to provide education in the ethics of psychological research, though it claims that as one of its goals (Sieber, 1994); it fails to address many active subspecialties of the discipline, including group and family therapies (Lakin, 1994), therapy with cultural minorities (Dana, 1994), and the teaching of psychology (Keith-Spiegel, 1994); and it suffers from being "long, detailed, and lawyered" (Bersoff, 1994, p. 382). These critics of the new APA code observe of their own profession's guidelines what Jack Douglas (1979) has suggested of all professional codes of ethics: "they rarely accomplish what they are purportedly intended to accomplish: the protection of the public interest" (p. 13).

[2] As Sandra Stotsky (1992) points out in her review of the literature on issues of ethics in composition and rhetoric, very little has been done in the field apart from examinations of plagiarism (see, for example, Kolich, 1983; Kroll, 1988; McCormick,

1989); "ethics" as subject matter in the writing classroom (see, for example, Bannister & Kearns, 1985; Coon, 1989; Harrold, 1986; Jolliffe, 1989; Smith, 1985); and the ethical dimensions of the writing process (McCleary, 1986; Stotsky, 1992).

[3] Patricia Carini (1975, 1982) and the teachers at the Prospect School developed phenomenological procedures of documentation and descriptive inquiry that ground their evaluations and teaching action in observation of the concrete particulars of a child's expressiveness: his or her preferred ways of using the media, languages, genres, and other modes of cultural expressiveness available in the classroom context. These expressive preferences manifest themselves, over time, in a child's various "works," a term Carini uses to designate all the material manifestations of an individual's significant projects in the world. These might include, but are not limited to, written texts, artwork, bodily gestures, and habits of relationship with others. In their reflected experience and understanding of "works," the Prospect teachers "make visible" for themselves each child's ways of knowing the world, then engage themselves in furthering a child's projects of learning.

[4] Researchers like Margaret Himley (1991), Brian Huot (1994), Louise Phelps (1985), among others. Himley adapted Carini's (1975, 1982) methods to a more specific focus on the texts of children and college-age writers as "works." With the community of writing teachers at Syracuse University, for instance, Himley developed oral research genres, modes of "deep talk" that systematized a "phenomenological process of descriptively reading...texts as works, as locations of actual language use, complexly and reciprocally cultural *and* expressive, social *and* individual" (p. 19).

[5] Max Van Manen (1990) offers a comprehensive and useful practical guide to what he calls a "human scientific" phenomenological approach, which can be adapted to research questions of meaning in various disciplines.

[6] Carini notes that in case studies, observations are most often organized causally, with details of the observed "interpreted according to some yardstick...or external referent" (qtd. in Himley, 1991, p. 26). That is, despite the qualitative, "hypothesis-generating" nature of the case-study approach, researchers tend to subsume the particulars they describe to some theory or system, seeing activities and behaviors as manifestations of some larger social or cultural process—rather than as the expressions of personal and unique processes. Carini, the Prospect teachers, and Himley thus construct "documentary accounts" that describe an individual's expressive projects over time. Our accounts are necessarily much briefer here, so we wished to signify our adaptation with the new term "documentary anecdotes."

[7] The writers of this article can be contacted care of Jane Detweiler at the Department of English, University of Nevada-Reno, Reno, NV 89557.

[8] This is also, as I noted in my story, a result of learning grammar and genre by *doing*—I always have trouble articulating the formal rules and reasons *why* a particular passage should be worded or placed within a document just so.

◆

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chapter 12

Going Public

Peter Mortensen
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

It isn't often that authors affiliated with composition studies reach an academic audience beyond their peers, much less a popular one outside of the academy. E. D. Hirsch managed to do so with *Cultural Literacy* in 1987, as did Mike Rose two years later with *Lives on the Boundary*.[1] Their commentaries on literacy drew the attention of academic and nonacademic readers alike. Yet surely Hirsch and Rose did not discuss literacy in all the depth and complexity both professional and general audiences might appreciate. More can be said. Indeed, more *must* be said, the stress here because an ethical imperative is at issue. In our journals and at our conferences, one finds repeated again and again the assertion that our work—our teaching, researching, and theorizing—can clarify and even improve the prospects of literacy in democratic culture. If we really believe this, we must then acknowledge our obligation to air that work in the most expansive, inclusive forums possible.

Of course, this is more easily said than done. As Joseph Harris (1997) argues, composition faces what Jürgen Habermas calls a legitimation crisis, it having to serve the often conflicting demands of professional academics and the general public. As it turns out, composition's struggle to build credibility within the academy has been a full time job. At the end of the day, little intellectual energy remains for the serious and difficult task of going public with what we do, with what we know.

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Still, as I have said, we must go public. And we can. As I suggest in this chapter, we are coming ever closer to publishing in ways that grant access to audiences outside the profession, beyond the academy. This is because certain modes of inquiry in composition studies now favor reports of research that are culturally and historically situated, enough so that nonspecialist and nonacademic readers can appreciate them. The impulse toward situated research reports, I argue, results from an evolving sense of ethical obligation to the individuals and groups whose literacies we study and to the publics we serve. But we are not alone in serving these publics. Journalists, essayists, polemicists, policy analysts, and others are writing about the same literacies we study. Indeed, sometimes they critique our teaching and research practices as part of their efforts to locate their observations and arguments in culturally and historically familiar territory. As I show, there is much to learn here, much to appreciate, and more to be wary of. And learn we should, for in failing to do so, we consign ourselves to mere spectatorship in national, regional—and, most importantly, local—struggles over what counts as literacy and who should have opportunities to attain it.

ETHICS AND SITUATED REPORTS

If we can say—as has been said before—that the appearance of Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer's *Research in Written Composition* (1963) catalyzed development of composition studies as a field of inquiry, then we may also say that concerns about the ethics of our inquiries have been with us from the start.[2] Midway through their report, Braddock and colleagues argue that "basic to a good design is the honest desire to discover or test some generalization about which the investigator does not believe he is fully informed, to discover or test some answer to a sincere question" (p. 23). For them, honesty and sincerity are the hallmarks of good research design, of ethical asking and answering aimed at improving composition pedagogy. Left implicit is the chain of relationships that extends the authors' ethical concerns from pedagogy to student writing, and from student writing to the literate lives of writing students. And so unstated are the obligations of an honest and sincere researcher to those uncontrollable "writer variable[s]" whose immaterial presence forever complicates the analysis of student writing (p. 6).

Spectral writer variables might still haunt composition researchers today were it not for Lynn, the 12th-grade writer profiled by Janet Emig (1971) in her foundational NCTE research monograph some 25 years ago. That Emig had studied *writers*, not just *writing*, was—and continues to be—recognized as a turning point in composition studies (see Buxton, 1971; North, 1987). The case study method Emig fashioned from interdisciplinary sources recast the role of student writers: no longer disembodied variables, their lives matter in the interpretation of writing (Nelms, 1994).

In keeping with the case-study method, Emig (1971) profiled Lynn's life in and out of school—her relationships with teachers, family, and community. Lynn, we learn finally, writes "often with great skill" despite being subjected to weak teaching. Emig leaves us with the "inescapable impression" that Lynn "is more sophisticated than her teachers, both as to the level of her stylistic concerns and to the accuracy and profundity of her analysis of herself as a writer" (p. 73). End of chapter. No apologies.

And no apologies necessary. Lynn *is* a gifted writer whose talent is blunted by unimaginative teaching, by unimaginative teachers. This is *true*. The facts are evident in case study interviews and composing-aloud sessions conducted by "the investigator" (Emig, 1971, p. 29). And clearly, if implicitly, what is true must be good, and therefore ethical. Besides, readers are warned in Earl Buxton's preface that they "will find the Emig report...at times disconcertingly outspoken" (1971, p. v). So it is that Emig can render authoritative criticism of writing instruction and pedagogy that in her estimation is unethical—owing to its failure to tap the literate potential Lynn and students like her bring to the classroom.

Doubtless the most provoked and disconcerted of Emig's readers were Lynn's teachers. *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* (1971) delivered them "bad news," broadcasting it across a wide network of teachers and researchers interested in high school and college writing instruction (see Newkirk, 1996). Few, if any, of us will ever know how the teachers took this news, for the teachers and Lynn's fellow students remain anonymous.[3] The value of anonymity goes unmentioned in Emig's study, perhaps because it is one of her method's first principles: the identity of subjects must be protected. Thus for Lynn's teachers, the reception of Emig's bad news was more or less a private affair. For everyone else, the bad news was not bad news at all, but rather the seemingly good news that the methods and ethics exemplified in Emig's study might well mean that "the learning and the teaching of composition may someday attain the status of science as well as art" (p. 5).

If Emig agonized over her characterization of Lynn and her teachers, no trace of it appears in the pages of her research report. How could it have been otherwise? Such disclosure would surely have been perceived as gratuitous, since, in the universe of discourse on composition circa 1971, the truth-telling power of method rendered unnecessary any explicit attention to the ethics of representation. But time has reordered that universe. Across the span of 29 years, as qualitative approaches to research in composition have proliferated and evolved, *representation* has grown to be a—maybe *the*—problem of central significance. The truth Emig knew in 1971 no longer speaks for itself in 2000. It is instead embedded in constructs whose foundations are unstable, whose materials are unreliable. Contemporary theorists may disagree on exactly how representation is unstable and unreliable, but that it is so is generally agreed upon, not only in composition studies, but also in all disciplines invested in questioning "the *relationship* between the representational material and that which it represents" (Mitchell, 1995, p. 14; see also Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, pp. 9–10).

Who may say what about whom, and how? This is a question of representation, one asked by more and more teacher-researchers who inquire into conditions of literacy and its teaching.[4] Emig answered the question silently, in keeping with the ethic of representation prevailing over a quarter-century ago. Today, because our understanding of truth and language compels us to struggle openly with problems of representation, our ethics of representation must also be stated openly, whether for purposes of confirmation or contestation.

My own work in composition studies has given me the opportunity to study readers and writers—research subjects—and to reflect on how to conduct such inquiry (Mortensen, 1990, 1992a). Yet most of what I know about research subjects comes not from this work, but from experience *as* a subject. Some years ago, for the sake of curiosity and a few dollars, I became a subject—presumably a control subject—in an ongoing study of alcoholism among young men (see Schuckit & Smith, 1996). In 1988, on Fridays for a period of weeks, I reported at sunrise to a VA Medical Center near home. Electrodes were pasted to my scalp and taped to my chest. A physician administered intravenous doses of ethanol. Blood was drawn and urine taken. Then, intoxicated, I spent hours in a small, dark room performing tests of mental acuity and physical dexterity. I am assured that the results of my performance are kept under lock and key at the medical center, as are follow-up questionnaires I have completed over the past eight years detailing my use of (or abstinence from) drugs and alcohol. These data are linked to me only by an encrypted chain of reference, and so I am essentially unknown to the researchers. My contributions to their study have been aggregated with others so that, in print, I am merely one "healthy young man" among 300 or so, all of us protected by our anonymity, and by a code of ethics that specifies, above all, that our participation in this project must never jeopardize our physical, mental, or emotional well-being.

My experience illustrates precisely those ethical safeguards—concealment of identity and protection from harm—that, modeled on biomedical research, have long governed qualitative research on literacy and its teaching. Are these safeguards sufficient? Are they appropriate? Such are the ethical questions raised in our field, at once beset and enlivened by the crisis of representation. The tendency today is to answer the first question in the negative: promises of anonymity and care do not alone constitute an ethics of representation. Teacher-researchers thus must grapple with variations of the second question. What ethical considerations should—must—inform studies of writing and writing instruction?

One way to address this query is to identify what is troubling about the protections of anonymity and care. Simply put, the peril of anonymity is that it can lead to invisibility; at the same time, the institutional administration of care can slide easily into paternalism. In the worst case, then, the qualitative research subject is neither seen nor heard. Efforts to ameliorate the negative consequences of anonymity and care typically focus on giving voice and embodiment to subjects. With voice and embodiment, subjects may assume presence and agency in the text of research reports—presence and agency realized in recorded dialogue, in acknowledged collaboration, and in coauthorship. These efforts at inclusion—especially collaboration and coauthorship—demand that heretofore invisible and silent research subjects take an active role in interpreting the "data" recorded by a study's principal investigators. In effect, this interpretive charge makes researchers and subjects partners in a study's first audience. And if a study extends the charge to an even broader group, say a readership across the discipline, so much the better, especially from the perspective of an ethics of representation that abhors exclusion.

But gestures toward inclusivity have spelled considerable trouble for qualitative literacy researchers, both in the field and on the page. If it is true that *exclusion* is the chief ethical problem facing qualitative literacy researchers, it does not necessarily follow that *inclusion* is the sole and sufficient remedy. Inclusion multiplies the persons and communities who may make claims on the representation of research findings—an ethical good. But inclusion also opens the door to conflict in which, as Sandra Stotsky (1993, p. 132) puts it, "ethical principles seem to collide, and the dilemmas (which cannot be easily or painlessly resolved) require much elucidation." This process of elucidation has so far branched along several distinct paths, all of which illustrate the compromises we must abide if we mean to honor inclusion as an ethical good.

One path leads to the barrier that often separates composition researchers and theorists from teachers and students. That barrier can be removed, argues David Bleich (1993), if we recognize in qualitative inquiry, specifically ethnography, the potential for "socially generous research": "Focusing attention on the classroom as an institution (a culture? a community?) can loosen the boundary between theorists and teachers, and between academic ethnographic work and the work of writing in classrooms" (pp. 176, 177). But this call for inclusivity is not so easily answered. The effort to tear down the barrier Bleich describes begins with an invitation. Like any invitation, this one, to erase long standing division, can be declined or ignored even as a researcher depends on its acceptance. Brenda Jo Brueggemann (1996) learned this in her dissertation study of deaf students' literacy at Gallaudet University. She initially fashioned a participant-observer role for herself that merged her research and teaching interests: she wanted to be the co-instructor of a composition class. But her offer of expertise was declined, and to remain at Gallaudet she had to position herself as a novice in the world of deaf college education. This refiguration, this repositioning, profoundly affected what she could see, know, and record. Rhetorically, repositioning meant that Brueggemann's first audience could not include those who knew most about teaching composition at Gallaudet.[5]

Brueggemann's (1996) case also illustrates another possible path toward a more inclusive audience, one that requires bridging the gap between teacher-researchers and students. Brueggemann invited two students featured in her study to comment on her ethnographic renderings of them. In one instance, that invitation was received and acknowledged, but never accepted in a way that could produce interpretive collaboration in Brueggemann's final write-up. In the other instance, the invitation was greeted, quite unexpectedly she says, with ambiguous silence. She concludes that "we cannot make them participate if they only want to observe. We cannot require them to speak if they only want to remain anonymous or silent" (p. 33).

Yet another path toward inclusivity finds teacher-researchers concentrating on ethical aspects of the rhetorical work that begins where fieldwork leaves off. As Bonnie Sunstein (1996, p. 177) puts it, "When I write ethnography, I feel quiet guilt each time my informants speak and every time I enter their written words into my computer.... My processed version of them exists somewhere between *my* mind, *my* field notes, *my* computer, and eventually *my* reader." Sunstein's observation underscores the point that even if everything goes well in the field—even if all one's invitations to be included are heartily accepted—the teacher-researcher as singular writer is left with the vexing (and often impossible) task of crafting sentences that fairly represent the outcome of that acceptance, that inclusion.[6]

Even the widest gesture of inclusion, collaboration at the point of inscription, in no way guarantees that teacher-researchers will surmount the difficulties to which Sunstein refers. Lucille McCarthy and Stephen Fishman (1996) found this to be so when they chose to co-author a report on McCarthy's naturalistic study of writing-across-the-curriculum in a college philosophy course taught by Fishman. Their work on "multivoiced" reports has led them to counsel collaborators on the following points: all parties—teachers, students, researchers—must enter a collaboration willing to change their thinking about composition and its teaching; collaborative relationships require continuing negotiation; accounts of such negotiations should appear in research reports; and the larger audience for the report should be carefully chosen to benefit all collaborators.

The path McCarthy and Fishman (1996) map in some detail, as well as those sketched more generally by Brueggemann (1996) and Sunstein (1996), share a common endpoint: successful publication—made possible by the process of elucidation Stotsky (1993) urged, difficult and troubling though it may be. But does prizing elucidation in this way compromise the ethics of representation by assuring, falsely, that representation is *always* possible, that the ethical dilemmas faced by teacher-researchers are never insoluble, never paralyzing? Lester Faigley (1992), writing of rhetorical problems similar to those under scrutiny here, reminds us that

> Bringing ethics into rhetoric is not a matter of collapsing spectacular diversity into universal truth. Neither is ethics only a matter of a radical questioning of what aspires to be regarded as truth.... It is a pausing to reflect on the limits of understanding. It is respect for diversity and unassimilated otherness. It is finding the spaces to listen. (p. 239)

Apropos qualitative research, I take Faigley to mean, first, that we should not expect an ethics of representation to solve all of our problems by ratifying the truth of inclusive, multivoiced, even collaborative research reports. Nor should we expect the foregrounding of ethics to justify flight from stating what appears—given particular perspective and context—to be true. Instead, an ethics of representation should engender respect for that which heretofore has not been assimilated into representation. One unassimilated realm we should take more seriously than we do is that which exists beyond our discipline and outside the academy. In that realm are audiences that have for some time exhibited demand for what we know about literacy and language. But to date, that demand has largely been met by commentators not affiliated with universities, writers often unaware of the specific ethical considerations I have just reviewed.

CROSSING BOUNDARIES

Yet just because "general" or "popular" audiences have shown interest in ideas we hold dear does not mean that we are conscious of how best to reach such readers. As I have argued to this point, ethical developments in the study of literacy have compelled us to write research reports that are situated, that are contextualized in ways that nonacademic readers could potentially find inviting. But let's not be fooled. It is not easy writing for a "general" audience. That much we know from our own teaching: our students write better given an authentic purpose, and authentic purpose often depends on there being a knowable audience, even if that knowledge finally proves to be a fiction. Few in the composition community have been able to reach and engage nonacademic audiences with arguments that we, in the academy, deem important. (As previously mentioned, E. D. Hirsch and Mike Rose constitute the exceptions that prove the rule.) But there are writers from outside academe who have taken up these important issues, and it is to a book by one of them that I turn in this section: James Traub's *City on a Hill* (1994), which examines, among other things, "remediation" in college composition.[7] Studying Traub's narrative enables us to glimpse the rhetorical moves necessary to reach a popular readership, allows us to discern what we already do well, and what we must learn to do better.

Traub (1994) sets out to understand how City College of New York, once "one of America's great colleges," came to sponsor such a "vast remedial underworld" (pp. 9, 12). Assessing City's perceived decline, Traub asks, "Do the limits lie in the college or in the students?" (p. 5). It emerges that Traub is concerned that students who pursue a course of remedial education at City College eventually graduate without the ability to think "critically" about intellectual problems. Far from being suspicious of a critical literacy—at least a liberal version thereof—Traub is interested in a way to identify whether City College students are attaining critical literacy in the course of their college studies. If they are, as their predecessors reputedly did in City's heyday, then the open admissions "experiment" that has so changed the college might, after all, be deemed worthwhile.

Several chapters into *City on a Hill* (1994), Traub's exploration carries him into the territory of composition studies, where he seeks to understand the "basic writing" program established by Mina Shaughnessy in the years following institution of open admissions at City College. Before moving ahead with his inquiry, he makes an interesting disclosure:

> I realized that if I wanted to get to the heart of the open admissions experiment I would have to become, in effect, a student, sitting in regularly on classes, seeing the same students day after day, and watching as the transformative process took hold—or didn't. (p. 83)

Rather than fashioning a traditional journalist's "objective" stance, independent and free from bias, Traub strikes a deeply interested pose: he dons the mantle of the participant-observer.[8] But the participant-observer role was not familiar to some of Traub's reviewers, many of whom expected him to write with the "objectivity" of a journalist. He addresses this problem by engaging in dialogue—explicitly and implicitly—with another observer of basic writing at City College, Marilyn Sternglass, head of the college's master's program in composition and a distinguished composition teacher-researcher.

In the midst of Traub's field research, Sternglass (1993) published an article in *Written Communication* reporting on her ongoing longitudinal study of City College student writers. The article took the form of a case study, which followed the writing development of "Linda" over her first three and a half years at the college. Sternglass characterizes Linda's achievements by observing her use of various "acts of discourse"—description, analysis, and interpretation among them—thought to "reveal the student's ability to use textual knowledge to move beyond recall and repetition of facts to...the creation of new knowledge" (p. 244). Sternglass demonstrates that Linda made great strides toward sophistication in thinking and writing during her time at City; she also shows how Linda fell short of the institution's—and her own—goal of full fluency in composing academic discourse.[9]

Traub undertakes a similar study, mixing material from his interviews and observations with "data" Sternglass made available to him. What he brought to the table was a wealth of historical and political context—context Sternglass did not (and because of space constraints, probably could not) work into her report on Linda.[10] He asked to interview "Tammy," another of Sternglass's students, and to look at the writing she had done for the duration (about four years) of her participation in the longitudinal study.

In reporting the results of his inquiry, Traub (1994) glances sideways at the composition scholarship that stakes out the territory he attempts to map. His aim is to gather evidence to help answer whether Tammy's problems with literacy result from cognitive deficit or poor schooling. Traub observes that "composition theory since Shaughnessy has all but anathematized the imagery of deficit," having substituted for it the notion that college basic writers simply haven't had opportunities to acquire the conventions of academic discourse (p. 117). In other words, the problems basic writers face are social and institutional in origin, not cognitive. But Traub is skeptical of this argument, and for support turns to composition scholars who embraced Jean Piaget's early theorizing about human development. Traub notes, rightly, that in this theorizing Piaget predicts the mastery of formal operations in early adolescence. If this is so, Traub reasons, college students unable to think in formal propositions must be cognitively deficient. Their supposed functional illiteracy, then, results from cognitive shortcomings, not lack of educational opportunity, so extending them additional learning opportunities is likely to do no good.[11]

Still, giving Sternglass's developmental taxonomy some credence, Traub (1994) is willing to grant that Tammy has made "remarkable" progress: "she had learned to write in the forms used by academics"; she knows how to insert a critical voice into academic commentary (p. 132). But then Traub asserts that while this may be a kind of critical literacy, it is not the sort that most benefits individuals and culture—thereby touching on a controversy yet unresolved (and probably unresolvable) in composition studies.[12] He applies a standard of "intellectual discrimination" articulated by Theodore Gross, English chair and humanities dean at City College during the 1970s.[13]

Using Gross's measure, Traub is sure that Tammy falls short of being an "educated" person, one whose learning enables the unerring embrace of truth and morality (p. 132). He concludes the chapter by voicing his suspicion that the well-meaning Sternglass is blind—as was Mina Shaughnessy before her—to the reality of Tammy's and Linda's modest achievements. But he concedes that this sort of "delude[d]" thinking may be an essential part of keeping the institution alive in the face of striking contradictions in its contemporary mission (p. 133).[14]

The relationship Traub establishes with Sternglass is a fragile one. In his acknowledgments, he thanks her for being "especially generous in trying to persuade me of the wrongness of my views" (1994, p. 359). And he is careful to cite from the literature of composition studies (though he is less careful about citing current publications): the names of David Bartholomae, Patricia Bizzell, Min-Zhan Lu, Andrea Lunsford, Anthony Petrosky, and Mike Rose all appear as sources.[15] Yet Traub is finally unwilling to see Tammy and her fellow students as successes—and Sternglass as a successful teacher-researcher. He wants City College to be what he believes it once was: rather than "reproduc[ing] privilege" as Ivy League colleges did, "it gave poor talented boys...the opportunity to make it into the middle class." City College thus was the "most meritocratic of institutions," and so it boasted "a moral status that no elite college could claim" (p. 10). The erosion of standards, evidenced in Tammy's performance, has diminished that moral status, the very quality that once put a City College education on par with that available at Columbia, Harvard, or Yale.

This is an engaging story. It gains its truth value, in part, by suggesting that Sternglass is too close to her students now to understand how they compare to those of the past. Traub claims to have the distance that Sternglass does not, yet he asserts that he is close enough to the scene of inquiry not to miss significant details. But composition scholars might well complain that, close or far, Traub (1994) never explicitly positions himself *vis-à-vis* the scene of inquiry, and thus must rely on institutional histories—S. Willis Rudy's (1949) centennial retrospective, for example—rather than experience to contextualize some of his claims. Traub avoids this positioning by limiting disclosures about his own background, about how his attitudes toward City College and its students have evolved over time.

Does it matter, for example, that Traub took his undergraduate degree at Harvard? That his father and brother did the same? That his mother attended Smith and his spouse holds a Yale Ph.D. in art history? Does it matter that Traub grew up in New York's Westchester County, the son of Bloomingdale's former CEO, a man proud of transforming "a modest and slightly dowdy emporium...where Park Avenue maids shopped for their uniforms" into "one of the country's unique cultural institutions" (Traub & Teicholz, 1993, p. xiii–xiv)?[16] Were these details woven into Traub's account of City College, readers might themselves be better positioned to understand the perspective inhabited by the author and to judge the reasonableness of his account.

Traub's (1994) difficulties with positionality notwithstanding, he has rendered what might be called an open text, one that invites (or at least allows) reinterpretation of his evidence and findings. That openness is partly visible in his dialogue with Marilyn Sternglass. It is still more visible in Jon Wiener's (1994) contentious review of the book for *Nation.* Wiener, like Traub a Harvard alumnus, begins his review by criticizing Traub's attitude toward basic writing instruction at City College. Quoting a clumsy passage from the publisher's announcement of *City on a Hill,* Wiener argues that "if Traub had found his publicist's sentence in a City College student essay, he would have held it up as an example of the writer's hopeless inability to learn. The point is that poor writing is endemic in America today" (p. 522). And later: "Traub obviously never read the papers written by middle-class white college kids in freshman comp at the state colleges in California; their teachers get just as discouraged as their counterparts at City" (p. 524). More intriguing are the conversations Wiener had with a number of the people Traub interviewed while on campus. Their collective portrait of Traub is unflattering: he was "uncomfortable," "incredibly condescending," "a tourist among the working class" (pp. 522, 524, 528). No doubt Traub was irked by these criticisms, and perhaps he was instructed by them. But the significant issue here is that Traub's text managed to provoke Wiener's complaints, and so has usefully extended ongoing discussions of literacy in higher education—discussions in which Traub cannot insist on having the final word.

If it is Wiener's contention that Traub was too distant from the City College to get a good view of it, it is another prominent reviewer's opinion that just the opposite is true. A. M. Rosenthal (1994), former executive editor of the *New York Times* and a City College graduate, fears that Traub has gone so far inside the college that he cannot

> make clear why his book is important to people outside New York who have no involvement in City College but are interested in the health of American higher education. The reason is that under one name or another remedial education is affecting a variety of colleges around the country. This is by no means just City's problem. (p. 9)

This may or may not be so. Rosenthal's comment points to the irrepressible desire for inductive proof of universal truth, a desire that tends to efface particular differences, whether that difference is expressed in terms of ethnicity, class, gender, or in the more elusive terms of space and place. Traub takes pains to anchor his observations and analysis in a local history, one that need not necessarily approximate the history of other institutions elsewhere.

Does that lessen the commercial value of *City on a Hill*? It does, probably. Traub's book earned a fraction of the national attention (and, presumably, the sales) enjoyed by Richard Bernstein's *Dictatorship of Virtue* (1995), a best-seller that takes up in one chapter the controversy over a proposed first-year composition course at the University of Texas.[17] But if the notice *City on a Hill* received was largely from those who feel they have a direct stake in the future of City College, is there another sort of value at issue here?

Yes there is, and it is *ethical* value—measured in terms of a narrative's power to provoke local discussion and galvanize local action to address a local problem. Had Traub made a more general case about remedial writing in college, he would have passed silently into territory unknown to him, where the possibility of ethical representation would have been remote. Why remote? Why can't Traub's narrative of declining literacy standards serve as a keynote for understanding the "crisis" in "remedial" college writing instruction nationwide? The answer to these questions lies, in part, in the overreaching claims evident in Bernstein's (1995) account of composition at Texas. It is possible, as Bernstein unwittingly shows, to advance general conclusions about college composition that must bear considerably more weight than any local story can support. One way to avoid such generalization is to remain alert to the specific points of departure that eventually lead to particular conclusions. Attending to the historical pressures that shape these points tends to work against the kind of generalization Bernstein offers and Traub, for the most part, does not. Traub's (1994) book, then, is the more interesting of the two if we are looking for models of potentially ethical communication, even though Bernstein's book may model communication that is more successful (where success is figured commercially).

Traub grounds his story in the lively recollections of such City College alumni as Irving Kristol (from a brief memoir published in the *New York Times Magazine*) and Irving Howe (from the third chapter of his autobiography, *A Margin of Hope*). These and other luminaries speak of a time in the 1920s and 1930s when a degree from City meant a chance, especially for young Jewish men, to rise out of impoverished circumstances into the New York's burgeoning middle class. Could Traub tell the same story about literacy and hope for advancement in, say, Kentucky, where I recently lived for 10 years? Could he strike the same stance? What attitudes prevailed—and prevail—in Kentucky that might undermine the foundation Traub lays for his narrative of decline?

Quite simply, Traub's (1994) tale of an intellectual golden age gone by does not describe the Kentucky experience. More accurate would be an epic tale of suspicion, of the citizenry and its universities sharing little common ground and nothing like a common vocabulary. The problem here, recast in theoretical terms, revolves around the power undergirding Traub's authority. It once might have been acknowledged that, by virtue of its location and its history, City College represents *the* paradigmatic case illustrating the inability of remedial courses in composition to save higher education from the stain of functional illiteracy. But the postmodern analysis of institutional power rendered by Foucault and others suggests that no single institution can claim such paradigmatic status. Institutions of higher learning across the nation are empowered in peculiar and interesting ways, making it difficult to generalize about how such power shapes remediation in writing—and public discourse about it.

Reflecting on the local texture of that public discourse, I recall the remarks of Wallace Wilkinson, former governor of Kentucky. While sitting as a university trustee some years ago, Wilkinson attacked professors for publishing esoteric research in "itty bitty journals"—such as the British journal *Nature* (see Lucke, 1992, p. A1). Professors, Wilkinson argued, would be better off spending more hours in the classroom teaching and fewer hours writing. Around the same time, a similar idea was given voice by noted Kentucky author, UK alumnus, and former UK professor Wendell Berry (1993), who asserted, sarcastically, that the "mark of a good teacher is that he or she spends most of his or her time doing research and writes many books and articles" (p. xiii).[18]

Readers might be tempted to label Wilkinson's comments anti-intellectual, as one writer did (Warth, 1992). For Berry, we might reserve the term "old-fashioned." But each makes a legitimate point (though one with which I must respectfully disagree). In their view of the university, professors should teach more and publish less. While the former governor likely envisions composition teachers simply instructing more students during a given week, Berry probably would allow for a kind of teaching that can be reconciled with the need, as I have been advocating, to speak publicly about academic literacies. But with conditions in Kentucky and elsewhere even more complicated than I have described them, it is going to be difficult for any academic figure to cultivate *local* ground in order to address a *local* audience on a subject such as the literacy of college students.

Be that as it may, ethical representation demands that such local audiences be sought out by "public intellectuals" of local standing. How else, then, to predict whether the critical literacy taught in Kentucky college composition courses prepares students to fight against the social inequality and injustice that both Wilkinson and Berry would agree beset the commonwealth. And how else to explain why in Kentucky one kind of adult literacy training—college composition—has been relatively uncontroversial, while historically much controversy has surrounded adult literacy education outside the academy (see Mortensen, 1994).

Henry Giroux (1995) underscores the importance of this mission:

> Public intellectuals...need to define higher education as a public resource vital to the moral life of the nation and open to working people and communities

> that are often viewed as marginal to such institutions and their diverse resources of knowledge and skills. (p. 250)

But we need to be careful here. If composition teacher-researchers are to stand as public intellectuals, they may indeed wish to speak to the vitality of literacy for the "moral life of the nation," but they must also speak to the ethical concerns of the local—the community, the commonwealth, the region. Else they risk making generalizations that may be as attractive and forceful as they are baseless and misleading.

Should every composition teacher-researcher feel compelled to write as a public intellectual for popular audiences? Clearly not. Catharine Stimpson (1996) cautions that "not everyone can be a public intellectual" because "it demands a particular set of talents" that not all academics have (p. 101). Still, Stimpson reminds us, "all academic professionals have public duties" (p. 101). In composition, we can discharge these duties by writing for the communities we live in, communities likely much larger and more complex than the institutional ones in which we work. Few of us will write a book like Rose's *Lives on the Boundary* (1989), but many of us are capable of sharing disciplinary knowledge with local audiences concerned about literacy. And, most of us are capable of reviewing a book like Rose's for local and regional publications. No less important, we might provide background information and testimony for lawmakers considering legislation relevant to our professional concerns. We might also write reports for school districts or state government agencies that are considering questions germane to our field (see Mortensen, 1992b). The list could go on. Unfortunately, there are few institutional rewards for writing in the public interest, although this may be changing.[19] And there are always dangers, chief among them making intellectually dishonest concessions to audiences not attuned to nuanced argumentation—what Michael Bérubé (1998, p. 217) calls "selling out," or "abandoning one's principles and caving in to the demands of the market."

Nor are there any guarantees (nor should there be) that interested publics will embrace whatever we share with them. Consider what two large organizations of literacy teachers and researchers recently learned. In March 1996, the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association released their *Standards for the English Language Arts.* (While the standards focus on K–12 literacy education, they are grounded in a tradition of theory, research, and practice shared with college teacher-researchers of literacy.) The NCTE and IRA were careful not to devise standards that could be interpreted as a national curriculum—lists of specific books to be read and skills to be mastered by all students in certain grade levels. Rather, the standards specify the conditions that research and teaching experience tell us must exist if students are to read and write in ways that will enable them to participate in democratic institutions and thrive in a post-industrial economy.

In the months following release of the standards, one complaint was heard repeatedly: that they are vague. That criticism may have originated in official government comment on the standards offered by Michael Cohen, senior advisor to the U.S. Secretary of Education (see Sanchez, 1996). The *New York Times* sounded the same note in an editorial shortly after the standards appeared (Anonymous, 1996a). Other newspaper editorialists and columnists soon advanced the same argument. In a Sunday editorial entitled "English as Mush" (Anonymous, 1996b), the *Sacramento Bee* argued that the vagueness of the standards document was a cover for a hidden political agenda. The *Bee* took particular issue with Standard 9, which envisions a world in which American "students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles" (p. 3). That "sounds a lot more like an effort to shape political and social attitudes than a serious attempt to foster the teaching and learning of any real academic discipline," the *Bee* said. Of the 12 standards, Standard 9 points most emphatically to a plausible defense of the document's perceived vagueness. For the standards—for any research findings—to have a desirable and lasting effect, they must be fleshed out locally in conversations that can be responsive to interests that are likely to differ from place to place. But the *Bee* editorial is correct in one import respect (although for reasons unlike mine). The standards document *is* an effort to shape political and social attitudes, if by shaping we mean to imbue something heretofore undefined with form and substance. That, precisely, is what is ethical about the standards. They establish the grounds for consensus and difference on political and social issues, and provide the conceptual tools for translating that consensus and difference into local action—liberal or conservative, radical or reactionary.[20]

What vanity, though, to assume that our contributions are ever needed for such local action to move ahead. Others will do—or claim to do—what we can and should do better. Strong support for this contention can be drawn from the controversy that prefaced a May 26, 1998, decision by the CUNY Board of Trustees to eliminate "remedial" offerings throughout its system of senior colleges (see Healy & Schmidt, 1998, for an overview). Individuals knowledgeable about the teaching of writing received scant attention during the course of the controversy. Aside from a letter to the *New York Times* by Marilyn Sternglass (1997a), little is to be found in the public record. That, ironically, left James Traub (1998) as one of the few commentators who entered the fray—in a *Times* op-ed piece—with any demonstrable knowledge about college writing instruction. And yet how much could he contribute? As Patricia Donahue (1996) puts it in an incisive review of *City on a Hill* (1994), it is "discouraging to note how *little* someone like Traub knows about what it is writing teachers actually do in the classroom, or, for that matter, what a critical pedagogical practice might look like" (p. 121). What Traub lacks, according to Donahue, is an appreciation for writing students as the primary "subject" of representation in composition studies, with all the difficulty that entails (p. 112). His aim to represent the "truth" of declining standards muddles the message about college students and "remediation," a message that could be presented in greater clarity and texture by composition teacher-researchers themselves.[21]

CUNY trustees approved a plan similar to Traub's proposal for a stratified CUNY: restricted enrollment for the senior colleges, but relatively open enrollment for the community colleges. Specifically, the trustees' resolution states that a student may obtain "remediation services at a CUNY community college, at a senior college only during its summer sessions, or elsewhere as may be made available" (City University of New York, 1998). But can it be said that Traub's words influenced the trustees' resolution? No one has made that claim publicly, and the reason may lie in the resolution's details. For it is well known that New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani would like "remedial services" to be offered "elsewhere" only, to be privatized (Healy & Schmidt, 1998, p. A22).

Where, we might ask, did this idea come from? Apparently, according to the *New York Times*, from conservative journalist and social critic Heather Mac Donald (Arenson, 1998).[22] Like Traub, Mac Donald has spent time gleaning the field of composition. Her most recognizable harvest: an essay in the conservative policy journal *Public Interest* titled "Why Johnny Can't Write" (1995), in which she denigrates the usual suspects—Min-Zhan Lu, James Zebrowski [*sic*], John Trimbur, Marilyn Sternglass, and others—for "expending vast amounts of energy making excuses for their students" (p. 12). We might wish to dismiss Mac Donald's polemic as ill-informed and mean-spirited, but we should resist the temptation: the diffusion of her work across a broad network of influence demonstrates—structurally, if not ideologically—an approach that could be useful to composition teacher-researchers seeking to affect public policy on literacy issues. Mac Donald's *Public Interest* argument initially reached a modest audience in summer 1995, but its power was magnified shortly thereafter when George Will (1995) summarized it in his nationally syndicated newspaper column, and again two years later when John Leo (1997) made reference to it in his "On Society" column for *U.S. News and World Report.* And Mac Donald (1998) recently returned to attacking composition teacher-researchers in a *City Journal* article outlining for Giuliani her agenda for reforming CUNY. She complains that "CUNY's remedial departments have been overrun by theory-besotted post-Marxists, who see in bad grammar a courageous blow against the racist patriarchy and a mark of freethinking individuality" (pp. 67–68). (See also Scott [1997] and

Stelzer [1998] on the influence of *City Journal* and its publisher, the conservative Manhattan Institute.)

Like it or not, Mac Donald has cultivated audiences whose attention translates into action with consequences for thousands of men and women whose literacy is our professional concern. Mac Donald makes the task look easy; her encounters with composition scholarship are glancing and facile—and arguably unethical. But it is her persistence that should command our attention. Her criticism of writing instruction for underprepared college students has been played out over a period of years in visible, credible forums (see Cook & Cooper, 1994; Leo, 1994; and Mac Donald, 1994a, 1994b, for commentary and response on remedial instruction).

CONCLUSION

This chapter began as an argument that teacher-researchers should search for ways to accommodate their writing about college composition to broader, nonacademic audiences. To support this argument, I provided evidence of professional writers who have taken up the cause of speaking publicly, if not always ethically, about college composition. I then suggested that for such writing to be ethical, it may indeed be anchored in national concerns, but it must attend to the local because it is there that political and social issues of great consequence can be deliberated and acted upon.

The prospects of doing this work well are evident in Janet Emig's introduction to *Composing Processes* (1971), in which she affirms her concern for the value of the persons and their ties to place represented in her study:

> The writer wishes to reiterate what she believes are the values of this study.... An experiment in capturing a process in process, the study provides certain kinds of data—humanistic data—that other kinds of inquiries into composition have not yet elicited. Perhaps its chief value is its steady assumption that persons, rather than mechanisms, compose. (p. 5)

Two things are remarkable here. First is Emig's assertion—bold for the early 1970s—that composition should study *persons*, not *mechanisms*. And then there is the irony: Emig's self-effacement, signaled here by reference to herself as "the writer," a tactic she adheres to throughout the book. A quarter-century later, introducing a collection entitled *Feminine Principles and Women's Experience in American Composition and Rhetoric* (with Phelps, 1995), Emig speaks in a voice that transforms "the writer" into "I" and "we," and in so doing lays the groundwork for thinking about composition scholarship as discharging a public duty.

Emig explains that she and her co-editor

> had been attracted into composition and rhetoric in part on ethical grounds, sensing and responding to its egalitarian and popular roots. We believe in common that all teaching possesses a moral dimension: teaching represents an ethical transaction with the learner, demanding responsibility, scrupulosity, and nurture. Now, perhaps, we would argue this as a feminist position; but we hold this commitment prior to our feminism, because it is made to all learners. Indeed, we each regard the learning and teaching of composition as democratic manifestations of a democratic society requiring serious, courteous, and equitable treatment of all persons across categories of age, gender, ethnicity, race, religion, class, sexual preference, and community status. (1995, p. xv)

Good words to remember as we realize that the ideal of professionalism entails democratic values that encompass both academic and social realms—values shared, as Emig suggests, by colleagues and citizens alike. Teacher-researchers in composition should embrace this new professionalism, or else be willing to cede their authority to others whose aims and ethics in speaking about literacy may be inadequate to the task. To tolerate such inadequacy would mean turning our backs on the Lynns and the Tammys whose literacy it is at once our privilege and obligation to represent.

NOTES

[1] Reception of *Cultural Literacy* among academics was mixed (see, for example, Smith, 1988; Sledd & Sledd, 1988), as it was among nonacademic reviewers. Rose's (1989) book, on the other hand, has been thoroughly embraced by readers on campus and off. Each has since shifted his focus toward matters of literacy in the schools, and the same pattern holds for reception of Hirsch's *The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them* (1996) and Rose's *Possible Lives: The Promise of Public Education in America* (1995).

[2] North (1987) writes that "it would be no great exaggeration to call *Research in Written Composition* the charter of modern Composition" (p. 17). Hillocks (1986, pp. xv–xvii) makes a similar point. But it is worth remembering that the significance of such "Great Moments in Composition History" should always remain open to interpretation (Schilb, 1996, p. 17).

[3] But Lynn herself is no longer anonymous. Emig revealed Lynn's identity in an interview with Gerald Nelms (1992). Nelms subsequently interviewed the real Lynn, Susan Gzesh, now an attorney practicing immigration law in Chicago and teaching at the University of Michigan.

[4] I use the term "teacher-researcher" here in its widest sense. Most of us who study writing also teach writing, and the questions we ask as researchers cannot help but be influenced by what we do as teachers. Further, if the intent of publishing research findings is to inform and persuade, then researching always culminates in an act of teaching. Consider the following questions, more pointedly phrased. How best can

student writing—and students writing—be characterized? To what extent can students of composition be involved as collaborators in research, rather than simply as subjects? What authority do students have in shaping, in advancing and suppressing, representation of their literate lives? A curious feature of these questions, one to be pursued in this chapter, is that they tend to blur the line between writing "researcher" and "teacher" identities. Put another way, teachers and researchers of writing are both engaged in the work of representing what their students do when they write, as well as what *they* do when they observe that writing. So both entertain similar ethical questions relevant to representation. That is an enabling premise of my argument in this chapter.

[5] See also Helen Dale's (1996) account of her unmet desire to collaborate, even co-author, with a middle school English teacher in whose classroom she conducted a study of student writers' collaborations.

[6] Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater (1996) notes that one way to salve the guilt Sunstein (1996) describes is to position oneself prominently in the text, so as to disclose one's point of view and, therefore, to acknowledge the distortions it might introduce. But there is risk associated with positioning for self-disclosure. In Chiseri-Strater's case, some readers of her ethnography, *Academic Literacies*, found her voice "self-indulgent and irritating," at least initially (p. 127).

[7] Traub's argument about the decline of college composition is but the most recent in a tradition that dates back at least to the attacks on composition at Harvard just before and after the turn of the century. For a selection of complaints, see Brereton (1995, pp. 236–312), especially the essays published in popular journals of the day: an anonymous article in *Century Magazine* (pp. 238-241) and Thomas Raynesford Lounsbury's longer piece in *Harper's Monthly* (pp. 261–286). Cmiel (1990, p. 320, n. 10) lists additional magazine articles involved in the Harvard debate, among them contributions by Horace Scudder, E. L. Godkin, and W. W. Goodwin to periodicals such as *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The Nation*. See Connors (1994) for an interpretive history of such complaints.

[8] Traub (1994, p. 83) continues by observing that a "social scientist might have found a less time-consuming way of reaching conclusions, gathering data rather than direct experience," a statement that indicates Traub's awareness that social inquiry is anything but a uniform science. He claims authority, just as would an ethnographer, by emphasizing that he "placed great value on sheer immersion, on the particular words and acts of particular people, and on the evidence of my own senses."

[9] Sternglass (1993) drew her analytical scheme from Richard Larson's (1991) FIPSE-funded work on writing portfolio assessment (circa 1986) at Lehman College, City University of New York. Larson's list of discourse acts is grounded in the speech act theories of J. L. Austin and John Searle. Interestingly, in more recent writing about Linda, Sternglass (1997a) sets aside Larson's analytical scheme as a basis for making inferences about cognition from performance in writing. Instead, she evaluates Linda's perspectives on knowing with regard to the epistemological categories posited by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule in *Women's Ways of Knowing* (1986). More specifically, Sternglass works carefully with the notion of "growth" in writing, with reference to Haswell's *Gaining Ground in College Writing* (1991). One consequence of shifting from documenting discourse acts to assessing

growth in thinking and writing is that Sternglass's argument becomes more accessible to nonspecialist and even nonacademic readers.

[10] Sternglass's (1993) gesture to City College's history reads as follows: "Thus this study will not claim to make broad generalizations about the writing and learning processes of urban, high-risk college students in general, but it will attempt to account for the kind of progress that is possible for students of this background. The City College, justly famous for educating immigrant populations in the 1920s and 1930s in New York City, seems to be fulfilling that same role now for both minority and new immigrant groups in the city" (p. 241). Let me stress that I consider Sternglass's *Written Communication* article to be an important contribution to knowledge in composition studies. Its importance is underscored by its inclusion in a recent text for graduate students edited by Wiley, Gleason, and Phelps (1996).

[11] But Traub (1994, p. 129) errs when he claims that "academics in the field have had to tie themselves into some serious knots to escape this conclusion." He ignores Piaget's later research: research that places the acquisition of formal operations in late adolescence, the age of "traditional" first-year college students. Nor does Traub attend to a similar claim by Vygotsky that late adolescence is when young people can reliably engage in abstract, propositional thinking. Bergstrom (1983) and Villanueva (1989) represent just two of many sources in composition studies that explicitly address—and refute—the argument about cognitive development Traub appropriates. All of this is not to say that Shaughnessy's work should be exempt from criticism; see, for example, Harris's (1997, pp. 76–90) critique of Shaughnessy's emphasis on teaching grammar in *Errors and Expectations* (1977).

[12] Traub (1994) had some insight into disagreements within composition studies over the usefulness of critical literacy as an analytical construct. For instance, he "drew information and guidance" (p. 353) from James Williams's (1992) review essay of three books that, Williams argues, present a distorted vision of literacy because it is filtered through the lens of "neo-Marxist politics" (p. 833). What he misses, though, is the discussion among those who accept critical literacy as a useful construct but disagree on how it ought to be defined and examined (see, for example, Lankshear and McLaren [1993], published a year before *City on a Hill*).

[13] Traub (1994, pp. 72–74) reports that Gross's mild criticisms of open admissions led to his dismissal as humanities dean.

[14] Sternglass (1997b) talks back to Traub at various points in the final report on her longitudinal study, *Time to Know Them*. She notes that Tammy (Sternglass calls her "Joan") expressed disappointment in Traub's characterization of her (pp. 67–68). Sternglass's case study of Joan offers a fascinating counterpoint to Traub's (pp. 240–265).

[15] Careful to cite, yes, but not necessarily effectively (see Donahue, 1996, p. 120). Still, Traub's (1994) treatment of composition literature is more even-tempered than his *New Republic* (1993) report on visiting the Fourth National Basic Writing Conference in 1992. In that report, Traub expressed amazement that critics of Mina Shaughnessy's theorizing about basic writing—Min-Zhan Lu, in particular—would have any standing at such a meeting. Lu, Bruce Horner, Jerrie Cobb Scott, Pamela Gay, Tom Fox, and Steve Parks were painted as "radicals," though radicals "uncomfortably, and even farcically, divided between their professional and ideological

commitments," as if this divide were not a permanent condition of professional life (p. 19).

[16] Biographical information on Traub, his parents, and his siblings can be found in the "Personal Afterword" of his father's memoir (Traub & Teicholz, 1993, pp. 397–403). Traub's spouse, Elizabeth W. Easton, completed her dissertation on the interiors of French painter Edouard Vuillard in 1989 and has subsequently curated several Vuillard exhibitions (Traub, 1994; Easton, 1989a, 1989b). These details are offered to assist readers in identifying and situating Traub's authority as a researcher and writer (see Geertz, 1988, for extensive use of such detail in locating the authority of well-known ethnographic writers).

[17] Most composition teacher-researchers are probably familiar with the controversy that grew from attempts to revise the first-year writing curriculum at the University of Texas in the early 1990s. The conflict has been narrated by a number of the composition specialists close to the revision project, namely Linda Brodkey, Maxine Hairston, and John Ruszkiewicz. Brodkey—a central player in the controversy—has published most extensively, reaching readers by way of chapters in a number of high-profile edited collections (among them one from MLA [1994] and another from Routledge [1995]). She has also republished and augmented her views in a recent collection of her essays, *Writing Permitted in Designated Areas Only* (1996). Hairston (1992) reached readers through an article in a prominent composition journal, and Ruszkiewicz (1991) aired his views at the profession's national conference. But aside from scattered newspaper coverage and a commentary by *Newsweek* columnist George Will (1992), the story of English 306 did not make an enduring impression outside the academy. That is, not until Richard Bernstein, former cultural correspondent for the *New York Times*, published *Dictatorship of Virtue* (1995), a study of "how the battle over multiculturalism is reshaping our schools, our countries, our lives," as the book's subtitle puts it. Among the book's favorable notices are those that appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* (McGowan, 1995), *Commonweal* (Worth, 1994), and the *National Review* (Kramer, 1994). Negative reviews are forceful, but relatively few (see, for example, Stimpson, 1995; Wilentz, 1994).

[18] It is worth noting that Berry spent the first two years of his academic career, from 1962 to 1964, directing the freshman English program at the University Heights campus of New York University, in the Bronx (see Angyal, 1995, pp. 20–21). Berry left NYU and returned to Kentucky at a time when the university had embarked on a controversial program to transform itself into the elite urban institution it is today (see Baldridge, 1971, pp. 35–61).

[19] The MLA Commission on Professional Service (1996) argues that such scholarship should be classified as "applied work," which "intersects with practical affairs and problem solving, making academic knowledge available in these areas. Beneficiaries of applied work might be government, industry, the law, the arts, and not-for-profit organizations" (p. 164).

[20] There is evidence that the NCTE is willing to entertain serious oppositional critique of the standards within its own publications. In a recent issue of *Research in the Teaching of English*, two essayists question the claim that "students today read better and write better than at any other time in the history of the country" (National Council of Teachers of English and International Reading Association, 1996, p. 5).

Andrew Coulson (1996, p. 311) claims that "this belief is not only wrongheaded, it is insidious, for it leads to the false impression that our educational system is fundamentally sound." In a subtler voice, Lawrence Stedman (1996, p. 284) asks, "Are these sweeping claims true?" and answers that they are, but need careful qualification.

[21] See, for example, Ira Shor's (1997) call for an end to basic writing instruction in the CUNY system, and Karen Greenberg's (1997) forceful reply, both of which appeared in the *Journal of Basic Writing*.

[22] With degrees in literature from Yale and Cambridge and a law degree from Stanford, Mac Donald spent part of the 1980s as an attorney with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. After leaving the agency in 1987, Mac Donald moved to New York and took courses at New York University and the New School for Social Research. It was then that she became "a crusader against multiculturalism and other fashionable social theories" (Machan, 1988, p. 64).

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chapter 13

The Ethics of Public Review

Miles Myers
Past NCTE Executive Director

Professions exist as a result of a compact between the state and profession in which the state establishes licensing laws and regulations limiting who can enter the labor pool of practicing professionals. In exchange for limiting the labor supply, the state asks professions to establish 1) a set of performance norms for determining good professional practice and adequate client "health"; 2) a specified area of knowledge that describes the profession's cognitive or disciplinary exclusivity or expertise; and 3) a set of service ideals, including a code of ethical commitments that govern the behavior of members of the profession (Larson, 1977). Of these three features, English teachers today have the most difficulty articulating a code of ethical behavior. This does not mean that English teachers do not have difficulty articulating performance norms or areas of expertise—they do. But they have produced numerous papers outlining norms of performance and expertise, and have only rarely produced a codes of ethics. In fact, the National Council of Teachers of English, which has numerous publications outlining their position on performance norms and on teaching expertise, does not have a single publication outlining their present position on a code of professional ethics for K–12 teachers.

Why? One reason is that older forms of a code of ethics for teachers no longer work as professional guides, and in general, the profession does not seem to know where to begin on a new one. Into the 1940s, the religious roots of teaching provided a stable and secure authority for a code of ethics for K–12 teaching based on a personal code for one's personal life. In this Ethics of Moral Models, teaching was a calling that shared with the ministry a commitment to the ethical codes of biblical commandments and an allegiance to the professional community and its calling as a moral model. The curriculum of this calling was molding character as much as developing contemporary standards of literacy, and strict rules of personal behavior for teachers required that single teachers not date in their local communities or visit local bars or wear unusual clothes in public places. Some school boards did not allow women teachers to marry.

In the 1950s, a new Ethics of Professional Privatism began to emerge as part of a new professionalization movement among K–12 teachers. The Ethics of Professional Privatism specifically dictated that teachers were not to speak to local school boards or to parents about education policy. Superintendents or principals talked to school boards about educational policy, not teachers, and teachers were asked to direct parental inquiries about policy to principals. In fact, in the 1950s, even writing a letter to the editor that contained criticism of education programs was grounds for dismissal of California teachers, the charge being a violation of a code of professional ethics, which prohibited K–12 teachers from engaging in public criticism of public schools (*Board of Trustees of the Lassen Union High School District* v. *Jack Owens*, 1959).

Consistent with the Ethics of Professional Privatism, clearly separated from the ministry and the traditions of a religious calling, the English teaching profession designed a curriculum based on the textual theories of Northrop Frye (1957) and W. K. Wimsatt (1954), who rejected the "intentional fallacy" in which textual meaning came from the author's life, rejected the "affective fallacy" in which textual meaning came from the reader's subjective reactions, and proposed instead that the text was a verbal icon and that meaning came from specific procedures of objective analysis. This new curriculum embraced the theories of Universal Man—for example, the work of Jacob Bronowski—in which human behavior was the same everywhere, and to advance this curriculum, English teachers joined curriculum groups to study the New Criticism of Brooks and Warren (1943, 1951) and to refine their understanding of the stable, universal procedures and meanings that were to be delivered to students through canonical texts.

In the Ethics of Professional Privatism, teachers talked only to themselves or to the mentors who delivered the tradition of human universals to them, gave grades based on the general claim of academic freedom, and resisted interactions with the public on a wide range of professional questions. In the Ethics of Professional Privatism, professional choices were called "professional selections," and public selections of different materials were called "censorship." Teachers felt no obligation to confer with colleagues or anyone else on grades or lesson planning, and teachers who followed their professional vision, shaped in professional forums, could ethically say, "My assignments are based on my individual authority—an authority that will resist the opinions/intrusions of fellow faculty, parents, and the general public. I have a 'Bill of Rights' or an 'Academic Freedom' that allows me to make professional decisions in private. My only obligation is to my students, and I, alone, will decide their pedagogical needs."

In curriculum matters, the claim of academic freedom was limited by the "in locus parentis" (absentee parent) legal status of K–12 teachers, a status that gave local boards authority over all curriculum decisions. In other words, boards could (and sometimes did) intrude into the curriculum decisions of individual teachers. Throughout this period of privatism, students in K–12, unlike those in colleges, did not select their own teachers or buy their own books, and as a result, teachers in K–12 did not have the same academic freedom as college professors, an academic freedom based on the free choice of students. In book purchases, the claim of academic freedom was often limited in K–12 by financial considerations in which limited public funds restricted book selection to a majority vote of faculty and/or school board members. However, despite these limitations, in general, K–12 teachers continued to use academic freedom as a foundation for the legitimacy of professional privatism and the individual choices of teachers.

Individual choice did not mean that pedagogy varied a great deal from one teacher to another. Within the Ethics of Professional Privatism, pedagogy was a technique for direct, unmediated translation of a form of literacy and of a theory of text and of language into classroom practices. Within privatism's developmental theory of Universal Man—for example, Jean Piaget's early theory—meaning and teaching technique are shaped by universal, biological stages of development, not cultural context. By theorizing pedagogy as a "technique" that will serve all classrooms committed to achieving a particular form of literacy, the Ethics of Professional Privatism was able to dismiss pedagogy as an intellectual project. Stephen North (1987), for example, dismisses the knowledge of teachers in the National Writing Project as "lore" (p. 373). Because the cognitive demands of pedagogy were technical, pedagogy could not be part of the core program of liberal education, which always focused on questions of interpretation and inquiry. Because pedagogy in the Ethics of Professional Privatism was part of a technical education, not a liberal one, there really was not much to talk about beyond technique. E.D. Hirsch's *Philosophy of Composition* (1977) was an example of an effort to describe the teaching of composition as primarily shaped by a set of techniques for determining the readability of a piece of writing, readability being based on universal human processes and requiring for understanding only "a few days of practice" (p.190). Thus, during the Ethics of Professional Privatism, the absence of interaction with colleagues on teaching questions was always justified by a simple and technical pedagogy. What teachers needed to learn was the delivered traditions of the subject, and this material needed to be learned from university and college authorities in subject matter, not other teachers.

The Ethics of Professional Privatism also required that teachers be, at least in their professional lives, indifferent to political action. Because the subject of English was defined as stable, universal knowledge, separate from students, the social conditions of children and youth and various ways to change those conditions could be safely ignored. Bruce Franklin was one of the first writers to point out that the objectivity of the New Criticism was perfectly suited to a professsional project in which English teachers were to ignore the Russian Revolution in 1917, the Harlem Renaissance (1920–1930), and the McCarthy Period of the 1950s (Franklin, 1970). Instead, teachers were to withdraw into their professional circles and focus on professional matters only. Carey Nelson has called this arrangement "a McCarthy-era pact guaranteeing silence and irrelevance from the humanities" (1997, p. B13). I am arguing here that this pact was based on the Ethics of Professional Privatism, which was itself based on a specific kind of literacy taught in the public schools and on the definitions of knowledge then current within the humanities.

One sign of the collapse of the Ethics of Professional Privatism was the decision of the Justice Department of the United States in June 1995 to charge the American Bar Association with violating the Sherman anti-trust laws in the ABA's procedures for accrediting law schools. In most states, the law requires a candidate to graduate from an accredited law school in order to take the bar exam, and in legal circles, the ABA is the only accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. The ABA, through its own internal processes, private and without public input, had typically decided through its own committees what features of a law school should be accredited and not accredited.

The public trustees of the Massachusetts School of Law and their dean, Lawrence Velvel, charged that the ABA, by using salary structure as one of the features to be reviewed and accredited, was simply trying "to feather the nest of the professorate," not serve students. The Anti-Trust Division of the U.S. Justice Department decided that a conflict of interest existed and, in an out-of-court settlement, the ABA was "prohibited from collecting or disseminating data from law schools on salaries paid to faculty members." In addition, the ABA was forced to revamp accreditation criteria regarding student-to-faculty ratios, teaching loads, and sabbatical policies (U.S. Department of Justice, 1996). Under the Ethics of Professional Privatism, the ABA was able to act independently. Now, under the Ethics of Public Review, the ABA must consult with public agencies on issues of class size, salary, and other conditions of learning.

Codes of ethics are also changing in medicine. Medical doctors, who formerly dismissed the issues of doctor–patient relationships as merely a technical matter or "folk knowledge" about medicine, have decided that doctor–patient relationships play a key role in health and that doctors, as a matter of professional ethics, must interact with the public in the explanation of medical practice. In the days of the Ethics of Professional Privatism, my dentist and doctor owned my body, had their private meetings, and told me—the day-to-day custodian of organs—what to do. Today, my dentist and doctor have deprivatized their practices, appearing on radio and television to discuss medical advice and telling me that I am at least part owner of my own body and must share in discussions of medical options. These new standards of professional practice constitute the new Code of the Ethics of Public Review.

Today, within English teaching, a new Code of the Ethics of Public Review is emerging from new definitions of knowledge. Alasdair MacIntyre, in *After Virture* (1984) and later in *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry* (1990), argued that a new understanding of ethics was needed for our age because our age has a different set of assumptions about knowledge. In the latter book, MacIntyre argued that by 1974 and the 15th edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the form of the encyclopedia had lost its effectiveness because this form required a unified worldview. Said MacIntyre, "Heterogeneous and divergent contributions, which recognize the diversity and fragmentation of standpoints in central areas, are deeply at odds with the overall scheme" (1990, p. 56). To meet the challenge of this new age, MacIntyre proposed that in schools "Texts have to be read against one another if we are not to misread them," schools have "to initiate students into conflict," and teachers have two roles—the first "to advance inquiry within [a] particular point of view" and second "to enter into controversy with other rival standpoints" (p. 231).

MacIntyre (1990) has outlined a fundamentally different set of assumptions about text and meaning, a set of assumptions that is the foundation of the Ethics of Public Review. These assumptions change the teaching of English. First, canonical texts and their meaning are no longer fixed and universal. Instead, they are situated and contextualized. In the Ethics of Professional Privatism, the aim of a literature class was "the one right reading" known by the teachers, but in the Ethics of Public Review, the aim of a literature class was to discover and to test the credibility of the many readings students propose (Booth, 1995, pp. ix–x). Different contexts and situations produce different readings because interpretations are, to a significant degree, based on the point of view of the reader, the way a text can be read against many different kinds of texts, and the way different times and places shape the intentions of both readers and writers.

In the 1990s dispute over the *Enola Gay* exhibit at the Smithsonian Institute, the Veterans of Foreign Wars objected to the interpretation of contemporary peace advocates that the *Enola Gay* was an inhumane instrument of death and destruction. The VFW was appealing to the context of a particular time and place in World War II, and the peace advocates were appealing to the broadest possible contemporary framework for judging human behavior. In a broad, contemporary framework, these peace advocates seem right. But the Veterans of Foreign Wars were almost most certainly right that within the context of the last stages of World War II, from 1944 to 1945, the *Enola Gay* could be viewed as a humane instrument saving thousands of GIs from death in an invasion of Japan.

Second, in the teaching of English in the Ethics of Public Review, new voices from within our own country are being heard for the first time—women and ethnic minorities, for example—and global connections are bringing new voices to us from throughout the world. These new voices bring new interpretations of texts and events, and public review is one way for English teachers to discover the new interpretations emerging from different contexts. The expansion of new voices was part of a general expansion in textual materials in literature classes, including new fiction and poetry, films and Hollywood westerns, science fiction, and the artifacts of pop culture.

The claim of some that a pluralistic selection of literary texts is, in fact, the key moral and ethical struggle of English teachers ignores the fact that political representation in a list of texts (is this or that group represented) says nothing about how these texts are read or whether all students get to read these books in tracked classes. Says Guillory (1993), "Canonicity is not a feature of the work itself. It is a feature of the transmission of the work," and "...analysis of this crisis in terms of the distribution of cultural capital will produce a more strategic theory of curriculum reform than will a pluralistic critique" (p. 282).

During the 1960s, new voices that had been completely ignored in the classroom practices of Ethics of Professional Privatism began to emerge in new literature and the expressive writing of composition classes. This expressive writing was almost always categorized as "private" and "personal," not open to public critique, many teachers commenting that it was improper for teachers to critique or comment on this kind of writing. Anchoring expressive writing in a private space of individual freedom and personal response, clearly consistent with the Ethics of Professional Privatism, encouraged the sport of using expressive writing to put people on trial for acts stripped of their historical context and prevented any critique of this writing in a forum of public review. In fact, some writing programs growing out of the 1960s gave the highest priority to expressive writing and actively discouraged the teaching of exposition, argument, and other forms of civic discourse, which had to undergo at least some public review.

In the teaching practices of the Ethics of Public Review, one reads texts against other texts, introduces students to multicultural perspectives and the conflicts within culture, and emphasizes collaboration and civic discourse. Teaching practices can vary a great deal from one place to another because these practices are the result of inquiry into and negotiations among at least three variables—the literacy one wishes to achieve in the classroom, the cultural development and individual needs of students, and the cultural inclinations of the local community in which teaching is embedded. The design of pedagogy requires intellectual engagement and interpretation at every point.

Within the Ethics of Privatism, teachers believed their practices were their private business, part of their academic freedom, but within the Ethics of Public Review, teachers believe their practices are, at least in part, the result of public discussions and consensus. Clarity of public language and an understanding of the public interest must become part of the professional expertise of teachers because teaching professionals now have a responsibility to present in public forums evidence showing how a pedagogy serves the public interest. In the privacy of their professional meetings and even in public forums in recent times, teachers have proved to be very skillful at theorizing about inadequacy of various theories of multiculturalism and common culture. But as Michael Bérubé (1994) has observed, teachers have proved to be unskilled at cultivating political alliances and coalitions for political action. As a result, Bérubé has warned that we may finally theorize multiculturalism adequately just at the moment that Congress eliminates the public schools and takes one more step toward dismissal of commitments to a common culture.

The Ethics of Public Review require that teachers make public a wide range of information about schooling. Teachers must ensure that there is a public release of the content, scores, and/or grades of all tests and achievement measures. At each K–12 school site, teachers should have a public display room showing the grades and scores of typical student work produced at the school site. Furthermore, in cross-site assessments of written responses, local teachers, parents, and other community members should score the district's exams, developing the appropriate rubrics and anchors.

Three radical changes are suggested here. First, in the Ethics of Professional Privatism, districts often turned the scoring of essays over to outside testing companies. In the Ethics of Public Review, this practice should be unethical. Second, in the Ethics of Professional Privatism, teachers who scored papers locally almost always excluded parents and community members from the scoring sessions. In Public Review, this practice should also be declared to be unethical. Third, in the Ethics of Professional Privatism, testing companies were allowed to impose security rules that prohibited the public and teachers from seeing the tests taken by the students. In Public Review, this practice should also be declared to be unethical.

The Ethics of Public Review says that English can never be separate from politics broadly defined. Politics create social conditions, and social conditions influence learning. For example, after 60 years of dependent children living in poverty, Congress has taken steps to eliminate Aid to Families with

Dependent Children (AFDC) , a program that in 1993 fed over half of the children in the cities of Atlanta, Cleveland, Miami, Oakland, and Philadelphia—to name just five. Senator Moynihan (1996) has persuasively predicted that the closing down of AFDC will produce a growing number of homeless children in our K–12 schools, just as closing our mental hospitals in 1963 produced a growing number of homeless people on our streets. Closing AFCD programs will undoubtedly have a huge impact of the learning of children. Therefore, politics must be part of the professional expertise and responsibility of teachers. Teachers must make their voices heard in the political debates deciding the conditions of children, just as doctors have made their voices heard in political debates influencing the quality of drinking water or providing free immunization for children.

In the Ethics of Public Review, teachers must be particularly aware of the way a curriculum can sort students into winners and losers, conferring status on some and denying status to others. When two varieties of a language are being used by a society, schools impose a policy of diglossia distinguishing between formal and informal varieties and, thereby, engage in a "distribution of cultural capital in linguistic form...." (Guillory, 1993, p. 71). When teachers teach the conventions of formal English, they are ethically obligated to inform students about the way formal–informal distinctions are used to dismiss and to elevate some people.

In another example of the social consequences of schooling, Rome's schools required the teaching of Roman and Greek, which were usually learned only by the leisure class—those with the money and time to learn a subject without much everyday payoff. Thus, the school requirement that students learn to read Roman and Greek classics resulted in schools giving status and economic rewards to those who already had it. In fact, knowing the classics became a social justification for the leisure, which the leisure class already had. They deserved their wealth because they knew the classics. Thus, a school requirement had the unremarkable effect of legitimizing the economic class structure, by making those with money look smart and, thus, deserving. Teachers have the ethical obligation to take all steps possible to ensure that all students have access to all texts and to various ways of reading those texts.

A curriculum can do more than sort and confer status. It can also conquer. For example, the Romans found they could use schools to conquer and hold territory no longer held in place by armies: "As the protective might of the legions weakened, so the imperial government came to rely to an even greater extent on its intangible assets; and the excellence of Graeco-Roman culture was turned into useful bait for retaining the loyalty of uncertain provincials. Steel was in short supply. So the provinces were to be grappled to the soul of Rome by hoops of a different make. Literature was taught with great zeal as an introduction to the Roman way of life" (Bolgar, 1954, p. 23).

In other words, says John Guillory (1993, p.60), "the legions withdrew and are replaced by schools."

Schools have, of course, been used to democratize society. For instance, replacing Roman and Greek classics with a canon of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Gray made school texts more accessible to all students (Guillory, 1993). Ordinary people who could speak vernacular English but not Greek found that Gray's "Elegy," with its quotable, vernacular phrases, was easier to read. Ordinary people were more able to enter the world of great works because the definition of great works had been changed. This new canon of Wordsworth and Coleridge also helped students to learn the new standards of articulation and spelling used in the "adopted" national dialect, and by knowing the national dialect, the average student was better able to enter a national discussion of the issues shaping national policy. Although the national dialect always marginalized many spoken dialects and spelling variations, the national dialect made it possible for the country to communicate across the boundaries of local dialects. In other words, a national dialect makes it possible for a national democracy to work. In the Ethics of Public Review, teachers must inform students about the relationship between language and power.

The key issue facing the Ethics of Public Review is whether all professional matters should have public review and whether all matters of public review should be legislated matters. *The Washington Post* (Anonymous, 1996), for example, has decided that the legislature should stay out of some school policies. After Robert Dole "made his disdain of whole language part of his presidential campaign" (Anonymous, 1996, pp. A1, A6) and after a legislator introduced a bill requiring all of New York State's high school graduates to take courses on "the causes and effects of the Irish potato famine," the *Post* had had enough. Said the *Post*, "To say these are not issues best decided point-by-point by government bodies is to put it mildly, and this is true no matter how worthy one considers the teaching of phonics or the narrative of the Irish potato famine." The *Post* concluded, "…to turn every curriculum disagreement into a political matter requiring legislative intervention is not the way to construct a sensible vision of what students should know and be able to do at the end of their high school education."

In summary, then, the Ethics of Public Review are now the governing principles of a Code of Ethics for K–12 teachers. A number of specific changes have already been suggested: public-professional boards to review all book complaints (see NCTE's policy), public involvement in the scoring of student essays, peer evaluation of teachers, staff development run by teacher leaders, collaboration among teachers and parents in curriculum planning, public release of all tests and achievement data, graduation boards at each school site (boards of parents and teachers who interview students and decide graduation status). There are other matters that need consideration. For example, what is censorship in a collaborative age? The full range of relationships between the public and the English teaching profession needs extensive discussion, and we are only beginning to realize the difficulty of our challenge.

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About the Editor

Michael Pemberton is an assistant professor in the Writing and Linguistics department at Georgia Southern University, where he also directs the University Writing Center. He has published articles in *College Composition and Communication, The Writing Instructor, Research and Teaching in Developmental Education, Computers and Composition,* and the *Writing Center Journal.* In addition to being a founding co-editor of the journal *Language and Learning Across the Disciplines,* he also writes a regular column called "Writing Center Ethics" in the *Writing Lab Newsletter.*

About the Contributors

Larry Beason directs the English Composition Program at the University of South Alabama. He teaches courses in linguistics, composition, and rhetoric, and his research interests include writing across the curriculum, writing assessment, and business communication. He has recently co-authored a textbook, *Now I Get It: A Commonsense Guide to Grammar and Usage* (1997). He has also recently published in *Research in the Teaching of English, Writing Instructor, Journal of Business Communication,* and *Washington English Journal.*

Jane Detweiler is an assistant professor at the University of Nevada, Reno. She has published articles on narrative as a personal and professional way of knowing, and is presently conducting a qualitative study of writing practices in an occupational therapy doctoral program. She also continues her research into graduate education in various disciplines, with an emphasis on how worldviews are transmitted and transformed in these learning contexts by both teachers and students. In her own educational community, she teaches graduate seminars in research methodologies, rhetorical theory, narrative theory, and rhetoric in environmental studies; with undergraduate students, she has explored creative, essay, and technical writing; women's literature; and language in science, technology, and culture.

Myrna Harrienger teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in writing and rhetoric at Texas Tech University. Her research efforts have focused on the rhetoric of medicine; the elderly ill; and issues of ethics, discourse, and institutions. Dr. Harrienger is currently completing an article for the *Journal of Aging Studies.*

Rebecca Moore Howard is Associate Professor of English at Syracuse University. Her latest book, *Standing in the Shadow of Giants: Plagiarists, Authors, Collaborators,* was publishedin 1999. Her articles have appeared in the *Journal of Teaching Writing, WPA: Writing Program Administration, JAC: A Journal of Composition Theory, Computers and Composition, and College English.*

Brian Huot teaches undergraduate and graduate courses on writing and the teaching of writing in the English department at the University of Louisville, where he also directs the Composition Program. He and Michael M. Williamson have collaborated on several projects, including editing *Validating Holistic Scoring* (1993) and more recently on "Rethinking Portfolios for Evaluating Writing: Issues of Assessment and Power," which appeared in *Situating Portfolios* (1997). Brian is also coeditor of *Assessing Writing*, the only journal devoted to writing assessment.

Andrea A. Lunsford is Distinguished Professor of English at Ohio State University, where she teaches courses in writing and in the history and theory of rhetoric and composition and serves as Acting Director of the Center for the Study and Teaching of Writing. She is coauthor or editor of *Singular Texts/Plural Authors* (1990), *Essays on Classical Rhetoric and Modern Discourse* (1984), *Reclaiming Rhetorica* (1995), *The Right to Literacy* (1990), and, most recently, *The New St. Martin's Handbook* (1999).

Jane Mathison Fife is an assistant professor at East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma. She teaches courses in composition, composing theories, technical writing, persuasive writing, and language awareness. Her research interests in response and assessment focus on using self-assessment practices to involve students in the response conversation. She has co-authored an article on engaging students in cultural critique and inquiry in a composition course about utopia.

Robert W. McEachern is an assistant professor at Southern Connecticut State University, where he teaches courses in business, technical, and professional writing, and in composition and rhetoric. He has published articles on the rhetoric of meeting minutes and on Bugs Bunny's cross-dressing as patriarchal power-play. His current research projects include an examination of technology and hierarchy in organizational writing, and multiple intelligence theory and learning-disabled writers.

Peter Mortensen is an associate professor of English and the director of the writing program at the University of Kentucky. With Gesa E. Kirsch, he recently edited *Ethics and Representation in Qualitative Studies of Literacy* (1996). Issues raised by the volume's contributors prompted him to investigate the ethics of writing about literacy for popular audiences.

Miles Myers, recently retired executive director of the National Council of Teachers of English, currently holds the position of visiting scholar at the University of California at Berkeley, which is also the academic institution from which he received his B.A. (Rhetoric), M.A. (English and Education), and Ph.D. (Language and Literacy) degrees. Before moving to NCTE, Miles was an active member of the California Federation of Teachers (serving as president for several years in the 1980s), administrative director of both the Bay Area and the National Writing Projects, and was an English teacher in Oakland, California, for many years.

Cezar M. Ornatowski is Associate Professor of Rhetoric and Writing Studies at San Diego State University, where he serves as Graduate Director and directs the Certificate Program in Technical and Scientific Writing. He has spoken on rhetoric, technical communication, composition, and literature at numerous national and international conferences and has conducted seminars in Poland as an United States Information Agency specialist in technical communication. He has published articles on rhetoric, technical communication, professional ethics, and Renaissance rhetoric and literature. He has also co-edited a special issue of the *Technical Communication Quarterly* on teaching, as well as an anthology entitled *Theory, Practice, and Program Design in Technical Communication: Foundations for Teaching an Emerging Discipline* (1997).

John Ruszkiewicz is a professor of Rhetoric and Composition at the University of Texas at Austin, where he is associate director of the Division of Rhetoric and Composition. He has a B.A. from St. Vincent College and a Ph.D. from Ohio State University. He is the author of *The Scott, Foresman Handbook for Writers* (with Maxine Hairston, 1998), *The Presence of Others* (with Andrea Lunsford, 1994, 1997), and *Everything Is an Argument* (with Andrea Lunsford, 1999).

Lauren Sewell is an assistant professor of English and Director of Composition at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. At UTC, she teaches a variety of writing courses, including first-year writing, professional writing, scientific writing, writing for the social sciences, and the theory and practice of teaching writing. This essay is part of her abiding interest in ethics that she has pursued in other venues, including an essay on the ethics of qualitative research in *Composition Studies.* Currently, her scholarship focuses on ethical labor practices in university writing programs.

William H. Thelin is an assistant professor of English, working in the Language Arts department at the University of Cincinnati. He earned his doctorate at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and is continuing his investigation into the politics of composition with more classroom-based research, particularly through participant–observation methodology. He has been published previously in *College Composition and Communication* and in the collection *New Directions in Portfolio Assessment* (1994). He is active in the Working Class Culture and Pedagogy group and can be found online through its listserv.

Lisa Toner is Assistant Professor of English at Wheeling Jesuit University, where she teaches first-year composition, advanced, business, and technical writing; coordinates writing-across-the-curriculum; and serves on the Institutional Review Board. Her main area of interests are the ambivalent position of the writing teacher, critical feminist theory, and the roles of introductory composition in postmodern liberal arts education.

Mary Trachsel is an associate professor of Rhetoric at the University of Iowa, where she has worked in the Rhetoric Department's reading and writing lab and has been active in the professional development program for graduate instructors teaching rhetoric classes. Her scholarly interests include literacy and orality, feminist ethics, and pedagogies. Some of her recent articles are on oral and literate traditions in Irish music, and on the reading practices of adolescent girls.

Nan Uber-Kellogg is a doctoral candidate in the Rhetoric and Composition Program at Purdue University, where she is completing a dissertation on issues in cross-cultural composition. She has been extending the ideas in "Composing an Ethics of Difference" into the areas of distance learning and nonverbal rhetorics. She is the writing specialist for Sonoma State University's Hutchins School of Liberal Studies.

Michael M. Williamson is a professor in the English Department at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He teaches courses on linguistics, writing, computers, and assessment in the doctoral program in Rhetoric and Linguistics, as well as undergraduate writing courses. He has co-authored with Brian Huot on a number of articles and book chapters on writing assessment.

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